



February 26, 2026

House Judiciary Committee

House Bill 1272 — Kinship Placement Safety and Assessment Requirements

Position: SUPPORT

Chair and Members of the Committee:

On behalf of the Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), we respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 1272.

MARFY represents private child placement agencies and child-serving organizations across Maryland that provide foster care, treatment foster care, residential care, and adoption services to youth who have experienced abuse, neglect, or significant trauma. Our members work closely with local departments of social services to ensure children entering out-of-home care are placed in environments that are safe, stable, and supportive of their well-being.

Maryland has made meaningful progress in recent years toward prioritizing kinship placements when children must be removed from their homes. Placement with relatives or fictive kin can help maintain family connections, cultural continuity, and emotional stability. MARFY strongly supports kinship care as an important component of the child welfare continuum. However, kinship placement decisions must always be grounded in careful assessment of safety, readiness, and the individual needs of the child.

House Bill 1272 addresses an important policy gap that emerged following regulatory changes in 2024 by establishing clear statutory expectations for evaluating potential kinship placements. By codifying a structured vetting process, the bill ensures that critical child-centered considerations remain part of placement decision-making regardless of future regulatory revisions.

The provisions included in the legislation appropriately emphasize that placement decisions should consider the child's perspective and emotional needs, as well as whether the potential caregiver can provide a safe and protective environment. Assessing a caregiver's willingness and ability to follow safety plans, comply with court requirements, and collaborate with child welfare professionals is essential to ensuring stable placements and positive outcomes.

Children entering out-of-home care are often experiencing significant trauma, uncertainty, and disruption. While placement with kin may be beneficial in many circumstances, there are also situations in which family dynamics, conflicting loyalties, or unresolved safety concerns may create additional risk. A thoughtful and consistent assessment process helps ensure that kinship placements truly serve the child's best interests and do not unintentionally expose children to further instability or harm.



Establishing these requirements in statute provides clarity for local departments, consistency across jurisdictions, and reassurance that child safety remains the central priority. It also supports placement stability by helping identify caregivers who are prepared to meet the child’s needs and partner effectively with the child welfare system.

House Bill 1272 reflects a balanced and child-focused approach to kinship care — one that recognizes the value of family connections while reinforcing the responsibility to ensure safety, protection, and well-being for vulnerable children.

For these reasons, MARFY respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 1272. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information call or email:

Therese M. Hessler | 301-503-2576 | therese@ashlargr.com