



MARYLAND
CATHOLIC
CONFERENCE

February 19, 2026

House Bill 570
Foster Care – Adjacent County Applicants and Reporting Requirements
House Judiciary Committee

Position: Favorable

The Maryland Catholic Conference (MCC) is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals, and numerous charities combine to form our state’s second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government.

House Bill 570 authorizes an individual to apply to be approved as a foster parent by the local department of social services for the county where the individual resides or a county adjacent to the county where the individual resides; prohibiting a local department from denying an application to be a foster parent due to the applicant's county of residence if the individual resides in the same county as, or an adjacent county to, the county where the local department is located.

Ensuring that children are placed in safe, stable, and nurturing homes is critical—especially given longstanding and serious deficiencies within the foster care system. A 2025 audit by the Department of Legislative Services revealed troubling findings dating back to 2008, along with new violations, including nearly \$700,000 in federal penalties for failure to meet foster care service requirements. Auditors identified 640 children who had not received a medical exam in the past year, with 110 children lacking an exam for up to six years; and more than 1,600 children who had not received a dental exam in the last six months, including 140 children who had never had a dental exam at all.¹

These findings underscore the heightened vulnerability of children in foster care and the urgent need to prioritize their health, safety, and well-being. Expanding the pool of qualified foster parents by allowing placement across adjacent counties helps ensure children can be placed with trusted adults in safe homes, while still maintaining all required safeguards, including

¹ <https://marylandmatters.org/2025/09/17/state-may-have-put-children-in-homes-where-registered-sex-offenders-lived/?emci=37fe0730-9594-f011-b484-6045bdeb7413&emdi=230d9c40-a294-f011-b484-6045bdeb7413&ceid=554789>

criminal background checks and licensing standards. The need for safe and loving foster parents is greater now than ever. County residency requirements should not serve as unnecessary barriers that delay placement or prevent a child from entering a stable home. This legislation helps remove those barriers while reaffirming the fundamental principle that every child deserves a safe home where they can thrive.

For these reasons, the Maryland Catholic Conference asks for a favorable report on **HB 570**.

Thank you for your consideration.