



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Gloria Brown Burnett, Interim Secretary

March 12, 2026

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
100 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 1383 - CHILDREN IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE - PERMANENCY PLAN REQUIREMENTS - POSITION: INFORMATION

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully submits information on House Bill 1383 (HB 1383).

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. Our Social Services Administration (SSA) implements the Out-of-Home Care (OOH) program which is affected by HB 1383. HB 1383 would enhance permanency plan terms by requiring juvenile courts to make more findings about whether local departments of social services (LDSS) made reasonable efforts to meet each child's individualized needs.

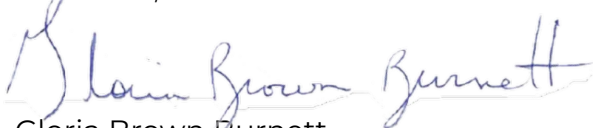
DHS supports ensuring that a child's needs are thoroughly evaluated during juvenile court proceedings, and that LDSS are held to the highest standards for the care and custody of children. However, as drafted, HB 1383 may reduce the court's effectiveness in assessing the needs of children due to new and overly prescriptive criteria. By adding such expansive and specific requirements, HB 1383 could require local departments to prioritize meeting each specific requirement at the expense of a more holistic approach to a child's needs. It could also lead to delays in service delivery and reunification by adding additional steps which might not be appropriate in every case. Additional delays could occur in permanency planning for children in out-of-home care because these requirements will put greater demand on the juvenile courts and could result in fewer cases heard each day.

As drafted, HB 1383 would create redundancies with other sections of Maryland code in a way that potentially conflicts with established and effective programs currently administered by the Department. [SSA Policy Directive 13-02](#) and federal requirements provide guidance for documenting efforts while maintaining both primary and concurrent permanency goals. Maryland's [Ready by 21 program](#) and [SSA Youth Transition Planning](#) already prepare youth for independence through a youth-driven and individualized approach. Mandating every factor enumerated by HB 1383 as required to meet a reasonable efforts standard risks limiting flexibility for caseworkers and courts to address each child's unique needs.

Existing law provides opportunities to ensure individualized reunification services are provided through zealous advocacy. [Court and Judicial Proceeding § 3-823\(e\)\(1\)\(ii\)](#) and [Family Law § 5-326\(a\)\(8\)\(vii\)](#) currently allows flexibility and considers age appropriateness in child in need of assistance (CINA) and guardianship proceedings, respectively. These subsections already require a court to determine the services needed to assist a child age 14 and older to make the successful transition from placement to adulthood. In CINA and guardianship review proceedings, all children and youth are represented by attorneys. Additionally, the child or youth may have a Court-Appointed Special Advocate (CASA). If an attorney or CASA believes that the local department has not made reasonable efforts to meet the child's individualized needs, existing law provides the means to raise any issue unique to that child's circumstance and provides the juvenile court a venue for review. [Courts and Judicial Proceedings § 3-802\(a\)](#) requires a juvenile court to ensure a child in a CINA proceeding has the programs and services consistent with the child's best interest and that their care, protection, safety, mental and physical development are provided for. [Family Law § 5-326\(q\)\(8\)\(ix\)](#) gives juvenile courts the authority to take any action that the court considers to be in the child's best interest in guardianship proceedings. Finally, [Courts and Judicial Proceedings § 3-816.4](#) already requires that a court inquire into a child's educational stability and consider a checklist of 10 factors in the child's best interest during shelter care, adjudicatory, dispositional, and change of placement hearings.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide information to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at justin.hayes1@maryland.gov.

In service,



Gloria Brown Burnett
Interim Secretary