

**SB402 Written Testimony - Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee (4/01 at 1:00 p.m.)**

*Residential Child Care Programs - Education of Children and Training of Child and Youth Care Practitioners*

Baltimore County Student Councils

Saan Rhyne - Eastern Technical High School Student

Chair Wilkins, Vice Chair Feldmark, and members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Saan Rhyne and I am a student from Baltimore County. I write to you on behalf of students in Maryland to request a favorable report on Senate Bill 402.

Senate Bill 402, crossfiled with House Bill 396, requires the operators of residential child care programs to provide the children under their legal custody with support in academic work, extracurricular activities, behavior, and other pursuits.

Youth in out-of-home care face academic barriers, both caused and exacerbated by a lack of structural support, and frequently experience disruptions in school attendance. Furthermore, research links structured academic time to improved attendance and knowledge retention.

This bill aims to close the long-standing educational gap for children in residential care, by not only requires child and youth care practitioners to complete training to support children academically, but also covers child development, learning differences, behavioral impacts, suicide risk assessment and prevention. Maryland currently has no uniform requirements for structured education time, despite the fact that children in residential settings frequently experience chronic school mobility, lower graduation rates, and a lack of access to support. Some of the systemic inequities that affect youth living in out of home care can be remedied by this important legislation.

This bill has bipartisan support in both the House and Senate. All students deserve to have guardians who support them in all their endeavors, especially youth who are most vulnerable. Accordingly, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB402 from the committee. Thank you for your time.