



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

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Chair Jheanelle Wilkins
Ways and Means Committee
131 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chair Wilkins and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for Senate Bill 402 - Residential Child Care Programs - Education of Children and Training of Child and Youth Care Practitioners. This important legislation strengthens educational support for children in residential care and ensures that child-focused professionals are equipped to meet the academic, developmental, and social needs of the children they serve.

Senate Bill 402 was brought forward in response to the experience of a young woman who spent much of her childhood moving between group homes and independent living placements, while her younger brother remained in residential care with significant educational needs. Her request was simple yet profound: to require consistent educational support for children in group homes, particularly those with special educational needs who too often fall through the cracks. This bill responds directly to that call by establishing structured academic support and by strengthening the relationship between residential care providers and the schools children attend.

The challenges facing children in residential child care settings are not limited to housing instability alone. Many are coping with significant emotional trauma, disrupted schooling, and a persistent sense of invisibility. Too often, systems are designed to manage children rather than to nurture them to keep them compliant rather than to help them thrive. Senate Bill 402 affirms that children in care are worthy of more than supervision; they deserve intentional investment, encouragement, and adults who recognize their potential.

This bill also recognizes that educators and caregivers play a central role in the academic and emotional development of children in care. By requiring training for child and youth care practitioners, SB 402 promotes a workforce that is better equipped to understand educational needs, facilitate school engagement, and support participation in extracurricular activities that enrich children's learning and social development.

Additionally, Senate Bill 402 may not solve every challenge facing children in residential care, but it offers something essential, hope. By requiring scheduled study time, academic assistance, and training for child and youth care

practitioners, the bill seeks to create a clear pipeline from group homes to schools to positive self-actualization. It sends a powerful message to children in care that they are not faceless, that they matter, and that there are caring adults invested in their success and well-being.

Ultimately, Senate Bill 402 exemplifies proactive, child-centered policymaking that strengthens both educational outcomes and the quality of care in residential settings. For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland urges favorable consideration of SB 402.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland asks this Committee to vote favorably on Senate Bill 402.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland