

HOUSE BILL 1207

D4, O4

7lr1655
CF SB 85

By: **Delegates Pena–Melnyk, Cullison, Krimm, Lierman, Morales, Tarlau,
Valentino–Smith, K. Young, and P. Young**

Introduced and read first time: February 9, 2017

Assigned to: Judiciary

Committee Report: Favorable with amendments

House action: Adopted

Read second time: March 7, 2017

CHAPTER _____

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Family Law – Treatment Foster Care Homes – Siblings**

3 FOR the purpose of authorizing the placement of more than two children in a treatment
4 foster care home in order to place siblings together if the local department makes a
5 certain written finding and notifies the Administration of the placement; defining ~~a~~
6 certain ~~term~~ terms; and generally relating to the placement of siblings in foster care.

7 BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,
8 Article – Family Law
9 Section 5–525.2
10 Annotated Code of Maryland
11 (2012 Replacement Volume and 2016 Supplement)

12 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
13 That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

14 **Article – Family Law**

15 5–525.2.

16 (a) **(1)** **IN THIS SECTION, THE FOLLOWING WORDS HAVE THE MEANINGS**
17 **INDICATED.**

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.

Underlining indicates amendments to bill.

~~Strike out~~ indicates matter stricken from the bill by amendment or deleted from the law by amendment.



1 **(2) "SIBLING" MEANS A BROTHER OR SISTER OF THE WHOLE OR HALF**
 2 **BLOOD OR BY ADOPTION.**

3 **(3) "~~TREATMENT~~ TREATMENT FOSTER CARE HOME" MEANS AN**
 4 **OUT-OF-HOME PLACEMENT FACILITY THAT IS PART OF A PROGRAM DESIGNED AND**
 5 **IMPLEMENTED BY A CHILD PLACEMENT AGENCY TO PROVIDE INTENSIVE CASEWORK**
 6 **AND TREATMENT IN A FAMILY SETTING TO CHILDREN WITH SPECIAL PHYSICAL,**
 7 **EMOTIONAL, OR BEHAVIORAL NEEDS.**

8 **(B)** (1) A local department shall place together siblings who are in an
 9 out-of-home placement under § 5-525 of this subtitle if:

10 (i) it is in the best interests of the siblings to be placed together; and

11 (ii) placement of the siblings together does not conflict with a specific
 12 health or safety regulation.

13 (2) If placement of the siblings together conflicts with a specific health or
 14 safety regulation, the local department may place the siblings together if the local
 15 department makes a written finding describing how placement of the siblings together
 16 serves the best interests of the siblings.

17 **(3) NOTWITHSTANDING ANY OTHER PROVISION OF LAW, IN ORDER TO**
 18 **PLACE SIBLINGS TOGETHER THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT MAY PLACE MORE THAN TWO**
 19 **CHILDREN WHO REQUIRE TREATMENT IN AN ELIGIBLE TREATMENT FOSTER CARE**
 20 **HOME IF:**

21 **(I) THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT MAKES A WRITTEN FINDING**
 22 **EXPLAINING WHY PLACEMENT OF THE SIBLINGS TOGETHER:**

23 **1. IS IN THE BEST INTERESTS OF THE SIBLINGS; AND**

24 **2. WILL NOT HARM OTHER CHILDREN PLACED AT THE**
 25 **SAME TREATMENT FOSTER CARE HOMES; AND**

26 **(II) THE LOCAL DEPARTMENT NOTIFIES THE ADMINISTRATION**
 27 **OF THE PLACEMENT.**

28 **[(b)] (C)** (1) Any siblings who are separated due to a foster care or adoptive
 29 placement may petition a court, including a juvenile court with jurisdiction over one or
 30 more of the siblings, for reasonable sibling visitation rights.

31 (2) If a petitioner under this subsection petitions a court to issue a
 32 visitation decree or to amend an order, the court:

1 (i) may hold a hearing to determine whether visitation is in the best
2 interest of the children;

3 (ii) shall weigh the relative interests of each child and base its
4 decision on the best interests of the children promoting the greatest welfare and least harm
5 to the children; and

6 (iii) may issue an appropriate order or decree.

7 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
8 October 1, 2017.

Approved:

Governor.

Speaker of the House of Delegates.

President of the Senate.