

Clara Lichtman and Joshua Tokar
2633 Taulton Lane Knoxville, MD 21758
cgtokar@gmail.com

HB369

We became foster parents on December 6, 2019. Before bringing our foster daughter into our home we were given a brief rundown of her history and what to expect. I naively assumed we'd been given all the information needed to be able to help her become a successful woman one day. Slowly but surely the honeymoon phase ended and we started to see through her smile and into her trauma. The first time my child made threats about starving herself, I called her caseworker. After hours of not getting a response, I called another member of her support team and was informed that in the past she had refused to eat and lost over 30 pounds. Not once was I informed that she'd had issues with food before coming to us and that we'd need to monitor her eating habits. Had we not taken these few words seriously, she could have gotten extremely sick. It had happened before, but we didn't know.

We didn't know that the child living in our home had cases against her for assaulting other children until she casually told us one day. Her caseworker confirmed this information January 6th, 2020. Exactly a month after she came into our home. When she was placed with us, we were told she is sometimes "verbally aggressive". We were not told that more often than not, it gets physical. To this day all the information I have about why our foster daughter is in care has been given to me through her therapists and biological family members.

It should not be up to a thirteen year old to tell us her history. We needed her full story so that when these things happened, we could support her better. It's not fair to foster parents, but even more so, it's harmful to the children we signed up to help. Whether or not we continue as foster parents after she leaves is still up in the air. Having critical information withheld from us by social workers has made us seriously reconsider if fostering is for us. We can't help without the full story, and we won't get the full story without HB369 giving us the access we need.