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Ways and Means Committee

Education Subcommittee

Finance Resources Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Support HB 986 State Child Welfare System – Reporting

Dear Madame Chair and Members of the Appropriations Committee,

Thank you for your consideration of HB 258 which was introduced last session as HB986. This bill is presented to you in the final version that received a favorable report from this Committee and passed the House unanimously last session. Maryland's child welfare system exists to protect and care for Maryland's children in a manner that keeps them safe and healthy and promotes their well-being. The system should act in a child's best interests by providing the services and interventions best matched with that child's specific needs, including their educational needs and attainment.

In order to ensure accountability, transparency and confidence in the child welfare system, it is important that families, advocates, the general public and particularly policy-makers, have well-publicized, easily accessible, and transparent data. This data should include outcomes and experiences of the children involved in the child welfare system *and* the educational system. Currently the Department of Human Resources (DHR) releases monthly data and a yearly report with data of children involved with the child welfare system, HB258 will help fill some of the important gaps in the data already provided by DHR as they relate to educational attainment.

HB258 will require educational outcome data not currently provided in DHS annual Child Welfare Performance Indicators Report. To help facilitate data sharing between MSDE and DHS, this bill requires MSDE to report and make publicly available the educational outcomes for youth in foster care. This information must be made available to DHS, the General Assembly and members of the general public.

Such indicators that MSDE will be required to report on are: the stability of school placements, the placements of siblings groups, the number of youth with Individualized Education Plans, the number of youth who have been retained, the number youth who have withdrawn from school, rates of absenteeism, and school disciplinary data. It is also important that it is disaggregated by race and ethnicity to help ensure that there are no racial disparities in outcomes for Maryland's families involved with the child welfare system.

To improve child welfare outcomes and to foster best practices, there must be effective accountability mechanisms, including the availability of data on outcomes disaggregated by age, gender identity, race, and ethnicity, as required by HB258. We urge this Committee to issue a favorable report so we have disaggregated data to evaluate how best to meet the needs of the children and families involved with Maryland's child welfare system.

Sincerely,
Delegate Michele Guyton