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Ways and Means Committee

Subcommittees

Education

Revenues



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB542: Department of Human Services - Children in Foster Care - Luggage

House Judiciary Committee

Thursday, February 15, 2024 1:00PM

Chair Clippinger, Madam Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

No child in Maryland should be forced to carry around their belongings in a trash bag. Children in the foster care system experience hardships that those who have not been in foster care cannot relate to. For example, children in foster care are subject to relocations from one household to another, during which they must collect all of their belongings to bring with them to their new home.

This process can be unnerving for children who may already feel vulnerable and isolated. To compound this, children are often given *trash bags* for the purpose of moving their belongings. This current standard is inhumane, and does not reflect the fundamental dignity that every individual deserves.

HB542 would require the Department of Human services to create and manage a decentralized supply of new luggage to be utilized by children experiencing foster care to transport their belongings. The department may solicit and accept grants, gifts, and donations of any kind to meet this requirement. Furthermore, the Department must report to the General Assembly the number of instances in which a child was provided a plastic bag, and the reason why they failed to provide new luggage. Under this bill, children are to be given new luggage once, not every time they are relocated, and luggage provided is theirs to keep.

It is essential that we end the shameful practice of providing trash bags for children in foster care to move their belongings. It is imperative that those experiencing foster care feel supported and are afforded the dignity that we would expect for our own children.

I urge the committee to give a favorable report on HB542.