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Economic Matters Committee  
Chair  
Business Regulation Subcommittee

House Chair, Veterans Caucus  
Chair, Southern Maryland Delegation

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

September 25, 2020

The Honorable Larry J. Hogan  
Governor  
State of Maryland  
100 State Circle  
Annapolis, Maryland, 21404

**Re: Executive Order to Protect Children Aging Out of Foster Care During the COVID Crisis**

Dear Governor Hogan,

Thank you for your leadership and partnership during this unprecedented public health crisis. We appreciate the steps you have already taken to address the issues impacting our state. Despite Maryland's efforts, it has become painfully clear that more needs to be done for our most vulnerable youth involved in our child welfare system, specifically youth who are set to age out during the pandemic.

Youth "aging out" of the system to live on their own are among the most vulnerable in our state, and unfortunately, the status of their vulnerability has increased during the pandemic and will continue to do so during this extraordinary time. Aging out of care during the current pandemic places youth at a heightened risk of unemployment, food insecurity, homelessness, and exacerbated mental illness.<sup>1</sup>

Due to the zealous advocacy of child welfare advocates and the commitment of the Department of Human Services (DHS) to prioritize the well-being of youth in their care, DHS has issued a temporary moratorium policy, but unfortunately it creates a piecemeal moratorium on youth aging out of the system during the pandemic. The temporary extension set to end September 30, was just extended for only one month to October 31, 2020. While we appreciate this effort, this very limited incremental approach undermines the ability of youth in care and local departments of social services to effectively plan and prepare for discharge and causes considerable stress for youth.

**We are writing to request you issue an executive order that allows youth to remain in foster care after their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and for at least 180 days after the last county in the state has fully re-opened.**

Some states, like Illinois, have announced that young adults in foster care will be allowed to stay in care "until the pandemic crisis is over." On April 24, Ohio's governor, Mike DeWine, announced that "...the state will cover the costs of all these youth (aging out) until this pandemic ends". South Carolina, too, has suspended age requirements to enable youth turning 21 during the pandemic to remain in their placement until after the "pandemic has ceased." It is unconscionable that no comparable plan exists in a state with the resources that Maryland has.

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<sup>1</sup> The Impact of COVID-19 on Youth from Foster Care: A National Poll (Foster Club May 13, 2020)

In short, we urge you to quickly consider issuing an executive order that will allow youth aging out of the foster care system to remain in care where they have access to housing, viable employment and other supportive services. Investing in Maryland's young people during the pandemic and beyond is not only the right choice for Maryland, it's the only choice.<sup>2</sup>

Thank you in advance for your attention to this very important matter.

Sincerely,



Delegate C.T. Wilson



Delegate Geraldine Valentino-Smith

Delegate Dalya Attar  
Delegate Vanessa E. Atterbeary  
Delegate Heather Bagnall  
Delegate Lisa Belcastro  
Delegate Harry Bhandari  
Delegate Benjamin Brooks  
Delegate Jon Cardin  
Delegate Lorig Charkoudian  
Delegate David Fraser-Hidalgo  
Delegate Catherine M. Forbes  
Delegate Michele Guyton  
Delegate Julian Ivey  
Delegate Carl Jackson  
Delegate Michael A. Jackson  
Delegate Steve Johnson  
Delegate Dana Jones  
Delegate Anne R. Kaiser  
Delegate Marc Korman  
Delegate Carol L. Krimm

Delegate Mary A. Lehman  
Delegate Karen Lewis Young  
Delegate Brooke Lierman  
Delegate Jazz Lewis  
Delegate Sara Love  
Delegate Eric G. Luedtke  
Delegate David Moon  
Delegate Julie Palakovich Carr  
Delegate Joseline Pena-Melnyk  
Delegate Susie Proctor  
Delegate Kirill Reznik  
Delegate Mike Rogers  
Delegate Sheila Ruth  
Delegate Emily Shetty  
Delegate Jared Solomon  
Delegate Vaughn Stewart  
Delegate Jen Terrasa  
Delegate Kriselda Valderrama  
Delegate Jay Walker  
Delegate Nicole A. Williams

cc: Speaker Adrienne Jones  
cc: Secretary Lourdes Padilla

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<sup>2</sup> According to Maryland DHS, if the moratorium were extended to December 31, 2020, this would impact 188 youth, at a cost of \$1,591,664.