

March 11th, 2025

Senate Committee on Human Services

Re: Testimony in Support of Senate Bill 1066

Chair Gelser Blouin, Vice-Chair Linthicum, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today in support of Senate Bill 1066. My name is John Grimm Jr., and I've been an adult foster home provider for 20 years. I got into this work because my wife was diagnosed with a brain disease, and I had to step away from my construction career to care for her and our two kids, who were 5 and 12 at the time. This work has become my life, and I want to share why this bill is so important to providers like me and the residents we care for.

Even though I have a sprinkler system in my home, I know that most adult foster homes don't - because we already must abide by the strong safety rules in place. For example, we have to prove we can evacuate everyone in the house within three minutes. If we can't do that, then yes, sprinklers should be required. But if we can meet that standard, forcing sprinklers on homes like mine doesn't make sense. These are homes, not facilities. Residents choose to live here because they want a family-like environment, not a nursing home or institution.

The cost of installing sprinklers is a huge problem. I built my own house, and even with my construction background, it cost me \$20,000 to put in a sprinkler system. Most providers can't afford that. I've seen the state shut down homes because they couldn't meet the evacuation standard, even if it was just one person who couldn't get out in time. In one case, the home just needed to reduce from five residents to four, but instead, they were forced to close. That doesn't seem fair to me.

We already have to do regular fire drills and document them. We have smoke alarms, carbon monoxide detectors, clear exits, and emergency plans. These are real homes, and we work hard to keep them safe. Yes, fires can happen anywhere—even in regular homes—but we have extra layers of protection in place.

The people we care for have chosen to live in a home environment because it's where they feel comfortable and happy. They deserve to spend the rest of their lives in the setting they want, not in a facility. This bill helps protect that choice. It keeps homes open and ensures safety without forcing unnecessary costs on providers.

Please support Senate Bill 1066. It's about keeping adult foster homes safe, affordable, and home-like for the people who depend on us.

Thank you for your consideration,

John Grimm Jr.

Adult Foster Home Provider, Benton County