

Submitter: Todd Kwapisz  
On Behalf Of: Marion County Branch Office  
Committee: House Committee On Rules  
Measure, Appointment or Topic: HB3835

Dear Chair Bowman, Vice Chairs Drazan and Pham,

The Marion County Child Welfare staff are currently serving over 300 children in our community. While we have seen a continued reduction in the number of children entering foster care, those who do come into our custody today have more acute and complex needs than ever before. We are now supporting youth with significant trauma, severe mental and behavioral health challenges, substance use disorders, and juvenile justice involvement.

Unfortunately, the current continuum of care lacks both the capacity and workforce to adequately meet these high levels of need. As a result, children are often placed in resource homes or with relatives who are not equipped to provide the level of care required often leading to placement disruptions. In some cases, children end up staying in hotels with ODHS staff because there are no placements who will accept them.

HB 3835A is a critical step to improving access to care for our youth who exhibit aggression as providers will not deem them to be too high of a liability. This bill also includes critical provisions that would improve access to both in and out-of-state placements for specialized treatment that is accompanied by significant legislative oversight. Children in our care deserve the best treatment we can offer, regardless if it is in this state or not.

If this bill does not pass, Marion County will continue to see a decline in foster homes and licensed providers. This will further destabilize placements and worsen outcomes for children already facing immense challenges. Without consistent, appropriate placements, children's mental health, physical well-being, and education suffer and our state's continuum of care for children falls further behind in providing the support they need.

The Legislature has an opportunity to take meaningful action. Marion County Child Welfare leadership respectfully urges the House Rules Committee to pass HB 3835A without delay so it may advance to the full Legislature.

Respectfully,

Todd D. Kwapisz, Holly Catalina and Andreas Tsiboukis  
Marion County Child Welfare

Program Managers