



**TESTIMONY ON HB103 – MARYLAND MEDICAL ASSISTANCE PROGRAM –  
INDEPENDENT FOSTER CARE ADOLESCENTS – AGE OF ELIGIBILITY  
HOUSE HEALTH AND GOVERNMENT OPERATIONS COMMITTEE  
31 January 2012**

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The ***Maryland Women's Coalition for Health Care Reform***, a nonpartisan, statewide alliance of individuals and 64 organizations, works to advance the goal of comprehensive, affordable, accessible health care for *all* Maryland residents.

We **urge your support for HB103**. In 2009, the General Assembly passed the Foster Kids Act, which acknowledged the unique vulnerability of a subset of Maryland's youth population – those who through no fault of their own, have been placed within the state's foster care system. As a result, their health and well being becomes the concern of us all.

A GAO report to Congress that year stated that, nationally, “80 percent of those in foster care are estimated to have significant health care needs, including chronic health conditions, developmental concerns, and mental health needs.”<sup>1</sup> Obviously, many of these conditions will not magically disappear when they turn 21. And, these young adults should be treated no differently than those who benefited from the Family Coverage Expansion Act that allowed parents to retain their children on their health insurance until the age of 25. The Patient Protection and Affordable Care Act (ACA) extended this benefit to the age of 26. Polls show that this is one of the ACA's most popular patient protections. Should we do less for those in our foster care system who are not fortunate enough to have parents to protect them? The Coalition believes not, and commends the bill's sponsors who recognize that these young people could lose their health care coverage at one of the most difficult and challenging stage of their life.

Can we really expect these young people to get a job paying a livable wage, to pay for housing and their most basic needs and to also afford the health care they need? Surely the state has a “parental” responsibility to extend health care coverage to this population. **HB130** is a logical and responsible step and we urge the Committee to give it a favorable report.

As an adoptee, I had the good fortune to spend only six weeks in foster care at an age too young to know what a lack of access to health care could mean. These foster care children are not so lucky - they already have many strikes against them as they move into adulthood. With **HB130** Maryland can, once again, do the right thing by giving them a much needed leg and, given that federal funds will be available to match state dollars to cover this small number of young adults, this bill makes fiscal sense as well. **Please support HB130 and issue a favorable report.**

Thank you,  
Leni Preston, Chair – [leni@mdchcr.org](mailto:leni@mdchcr.org)

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<sup>1</sup> FOSTER CARE: State Practices for Assessing Health Needs, Facilitating Service Delivery, and Monitoring Children's Care, p. 1. United States Government Accountability Office. February 2009 <http://www.gao.gov/cgi-bin/getrpt?GAO-09-26>