

# **Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) Pilot Proposal**

A Family-Based Alternative to Congregate Care

Submitted to: Maryland Department of Human Services

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## 1. Executive Summary:

This proposal outlines a 12-month pilot initiative to launch a **Foster Home Hybrid (FHH)** model in Maryland as a family-based alternative to traditional group home placements. Developed by **Love, Balance, and Bloom (LBB)**, the FHH model enables licensed foster parents to receive a **\$3,500 monthly stipend per youth** in exchange for providing full-time care, supervision, transportation, and trauma-informed support for **3 to 5 teens** (ages 12–18) in a structured, home-based environment.

The model is designed to support youth currently in or at risk of group care particularly older youth and sibling groups who are historically under-placed in traditional foster homes. FHH bridges the gap between individualized care and capacity needs by allowing caregivers to serve multiple youth in one stable, nurturing setting.

Federal policy changes under the **Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)** have restricted federal reimbursement for group homes beyond 14 days unless certified as Qualified Residential Treatment Programs (QRTPs). As a result, Maryland now bears a greater share of placement costs—spending between **\$19,000 and \$65,000 per youth per month** on QRTP-level care. In contrast, the FHH model offers an **80%+ cost reduction**, with an estimated annual cost of **\$42,000 per youth**.

We respectfully request that the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) partner with LBB to launch the FHH model as a **state-funded pilot**. The pilot would:

- Provide flat monthly stipends of \$3,500 per youth to full-time caregivers
- Include monthly check-ins and data collection to evaluate cost savings, placement stability, and youth well-being
- Offer a scalable, family-centered model that aligns with federal mandates and reduces long-term system costs

This pilot offers Maryland a timely, fiscally responsible, and outcomes-driven opportunity to transform how it serves hard-to-place youth—by moving them from facilities into homes.

## 2. Background and Need:

Maryland struggles to place older youth, teens, and sibling groups in stable, family-based foster homes due to a shortage of qualified, retained foster families. As a result, many are placed in costly group homes, which often lack consistency and hinder relational healing. The data is clear:



- Only ~65% of foster youth graduate high school by age 21; just 3–10% complete a 4-year college degree.
- Foster youth placed in group homes are 2.5x more likely to become involved in the juvenile justice system.
- Nearly 25% of former foster youth are arrested within two years of aging out of care.
- Group homes are associated with increased instability and lower permanency outcomes.

### **Evidence Supporting Family-Based Care:**

Family-based care is also significantly more cost-effective—typically \$25,000–\$35,000 per child annually versus up to \$150,000 in group homes. These outcomes align with the 2018 Family First Prevention Services Act, which urges states to reduce institutional placements and invest in family-centered care.

Yet despite this clear advantage, **many licensed foster homes go underutilized**—not from lack of availability, but due to caregiver burnout, financial strain, and insufficient flexible support, especially for older youth and sibling groups. This creates a critical gap in placements. The Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) model tackles these barriers head-on, offering enhanced support that makes family-based care more sustainable and scalable for the youth who need it most.

### **References:**

- AFCARS Report, 2023 (HHS)
- CEBC4CW.org
- Family First Prevention Services Act, 2018
- Courtney, 2010, *Child Welfare Journal*
- Annie E. Casey Foundation, 2023

### **Maryland's Foster Home Shortage:**

As of 2025, Maryland has roughly 1,462 licensed foster homes yet demand exceeds supply by over 30%, especially for older youth and sibling groups. More than 35% of youth ages 12–18 experience multiple placement disruptions due to the lack of stable, supported family-based options. These frequent moves increase instability, worsen outcomes, and fuel the state's continued reliance on high-cost group homes.

**Real-life example:** Currently a licensed foster parent approved for 10 youth receives just \$900 /month per child making it nearly impossible to provide high-quality care at scale. Meanwhile, group homes often receive \$10,000 –\$12,000 per child monthly.

This glaring disparity doesn't reflect a lack of heart—it reflects a lack of support and resources. The Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) model was created to close that gap, empowering families to offer the same structure and care group homes are paid to provide at a fraction of the cost.



**3. Proposed Model: Foster Home Hybrid:** FHH blends elements of a group home with a family-based licensed foster home. Key features include:

- Enhanced daily rate (approximately \$116/day or \$3,500/month per child)
- On-call support and crisis coordination (in partnership with DHS)
- Life skills programming using LBB's Thrive360 curriculum
- Youth orientation and engagement before placement
- Cultural relevance, relational consistency, and local community integration

Shared Standards with Group Homes:

- Safety inspections and licensing compliance
- Youth intake protocols
- Oversight and documentation
- Youth rights and grievance procedures

These alignments ensure that youth placed in Hybrid homes receive consistent protection and quality of care, while allowing caregivers to operate within a supportive, home-based setting.

**Comparison of Key Requirements: Group Homes vs. Foster Home Hybrid:**

Requirement / Feature	Licensed Group Home	Foster Home Hybrid
Licensing & Safety Inspections	State-licensed, frequent inspections	Licensed foster home, DHS inspections
Caregiver Qualifications	Staff with specific training	Licensed foster parents with additional hybrid orientation
Youth Intake Protocol	Formal intake process	Coordinated with DHS, youth orientation
Oversight & Documentation	Extensive case notes and monitoring	Regular case documentation and DHS monitoring
Youth Rights & Grievance Process	Established and formalized	Same protections, accessible grievance mechanisms
Emergency & Crisis Planning	On-site crisis intervention available	On-call support via DHS collaboration
Training & Professional Development	Mandatory staff training	Foster parent training plus hybrid-specific training
Household Capacity	Usually 4–6 youth	Licensed for 3–5 youth, including biological/adopted children
Funding & Budget	Per youth, covers meals, utilities, staff	Enhanced foster care rate covering similar costs plus wear and tear
Data Sharing & Confidentiality	Managed by provider and DHS	Shared compliance with DHS policies

**3b. Cost Analysis & Fiscal Impact:** The Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) model is a fiscally responsible alternative to traditional group care placements. Maryland currently pays between **\$8,000 and \$14,000 per month** for many group home or QRTP-level placements, depending on the provider and intensity of services. These costs are often driven by 24/7 staffing, clinical supervision, facility overhead, and administrative compliance—expenses that do not directly contribute to relational stability or family integration.

**Maryland-Specific Cost Burden of QRTPs:** According to the Maryland Interagency Rates Committee (IRC), the cost of placing a youth in a Qualified Residential Treatment Program



(QRTP) or equivalent residential facility ranges from **\$633 to \$2,178 per day**, depending on service level. This equates to a **monthly cost of \$19,000 to \$65,000 per child**. While some placements may be eligible for partial federal reimbursement under Title IV-E, **Maryland still**

**covers a significant share**—especially when placements fall outside federal guidelines or exceed the 14-day FFPSA limit.

In comparison, the Foster Home Hybrid model proposes a **flat stipend of \$3,500/month**, covering 24-hour supervision, transportation, and trauma-informed caregiving in a licensed family-based setting. This represents an **80%+ cost reduction per child**, while providing relational consistency, individualized care, and better long-term outcomes. Even re-allocating a **fraction** of QRTP expenditures toward FHH placements could yield **millions in annual savings** while helping Maryland meet federal mandates and modernize its child welfare approach.

This cost advantage, paired with the therapeutic value of stable family care, positions FHH as a **strategic and cost-effective solution** to both fiscal and human capital challenges in Maryland's foster care system.

*(Source: Maryland Interagency Rates Committee, FY2025 IRC Rate Book; DHS FY26 Budget Request)*

#### **4. Goals and Objectives:**

- Reduce group home placements by **at least 30%** among youth ages 12–18 in pilot counties within 18 months.
- Increase **family-based placements** for teens, sibling groups, and youth with mild to moderate behavioral needs.
- Cut state **group care spending by 50–60%** through a more efficient, community-rooted model.
- Improve **placement stability** by decreasing the number of youth experiencing multiple moves.
- Develop a **scalable, evidence-informed model** that DHS can replicate statewide and adapt across jurisdictions.

Key Success Measures: (Within 12 Months)

- **Placement data** showing improved stability, fewer disruptions, and higher permanency rates.
- **Satisfaction surveys** from youth and caregivers indicating stronger relational and emotional outcomes.
- **Cost-benefit analysis** demonstrating significant savings over traditional group home placements.
- **Recruitment and retention** of qualified foster families participating in the hybrid model.



- **Policy and practice recommendations** to support statewide expansion and cross-agency alignment.

## 5. Implementation Plan:

**Pilot Site:** The initial pilot will launch in Mr. Smith’s licensed foster home, a high-capacity, DHS-approved residence. Program evaluation and oversight will be conducted in close partnership with the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS).

**Eligibility Criteria:** Youth served will include those aged **12–18**, particularly teens with prior placement disruptions, new placements, teens with children and sibling groups teens. Each home will support **3–5 foster youth**, including biological/adopted children, in accordance with state licensing limits.

### Foster Parent Requirements (for current and future Hybrid Homes)

- Maintain **active foster care licensure** in good standing
- Complete **hybrid-specific orientation and training**
- Accept a **minimum of 3 foster youth**, based on capacity
- Commit to ongoing **DHS reporting, documentation, and monitoring protocols**

**Shared Standards with Group Homes:** The Foster Home Hybrid will follow many of the same compliance and safety expectations as traditional group homes, including:

- Case documentation
- Youth intake and orientation
- Scheduled home visits and inspections
- Caregiver training
- Incident and emergency reporting
- Crisis and emergency planning

**Oversight and Accountability:** DHS will maintain full authority over licensing, inspections, compliance, and periodic reviews. FHH caregivers will adhere to all monitoring, documentation, and reporting expectations and participate in structured youth feedback processes.

- To support placement continuity and caregiver sustainability, temporary dips in the number of youth placed—due to reunification, transitions, or aging out—will not impact a caregiver’s hybrid eligibility or enhanced rate, provided the home remains in good standing and available for future placements.
- A grace period of 60–90 days will apply, during which the caregiver may continue receiving the enhanced rate for eligible youth still in the home, even if the number of youth temporarily falls below the minimum threshold of three.



**Example:** A caregiver licensed under the FHH model is caring for 3 teens. One youth reunifies with family and leaves the home. For the next 75 days, the caregiver continues to receive the enhanced rate for the remaining 2 youth and remains eligible to accept new placements. If no new youth are placed by day 90, DHS will review the home's status and determine continued eligibility.

**Household Support Considerations:** The enhanced hybrid rate is designed to ensure caregivers can meet the full spectrum of youth needs:

- Including food, transportation, clothing, and daily supervision without facing financial hardship.
- additional costs that come with safely housing multiple high-needs youth, including utilities, transportation, and home upkeep

FHH caregivers will maintain standard liability insurance and follow DHS confidentiality and data protection policies at all times.

**Emergency and Crisis Placements:** In the event of a placement disruption or emergency, DHS will coordinate reassignment and ensure appropriate transitions. FHH caregivers will provide short-term transitional support when applicable, with the goal of minimizing trauma and promoting continuity of care for the youth involved.

### **5a. Risk Mitigation and Contingency Planning:**

To ensure youth safety and overall program integrity, the Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) model includes multiple layers of risk mitigation:

- **Enhanced supervision:** Foster parents receive hybrid-specific training in crisis management, trauma-informed care, and behavioral supports. Daily oversight is maintained in alignment with group home supervision standards.
- **On-call DHS collaboration:** DHS partners provide 24/7 crisis response and immediate support, ensuring rapid intervention when necessary.
- **Emergency transitions:** In the event of placement disruption, DHS will coordinate prompt reassignment while prioritizing youth continuity and minimizing emotional trauma.
- **Ongoing monitoring:** Regular home visits, unannounced inspections, youth feedback mechanisms, and consistent documentation enable proactive identification and resolution of potential risks.

These protections **mirror or exceed** current DHS protocols for traditional foster care, creating a safe, structured, and family-based environment even for high-need youth.



## 5b. Scalability and Broader Impact

**Eligibility Requirements:** To qualify as an FHH site, foster parents must:

- Hold an active Maryland foster care license, (income, background check ect.)
- Be licensed to care for at least three youth (including biological/adopted children)
- Complete FHH orientation and training on trauma-informed care, life skills delivery, and crisis readiness
- Commit to serving teens (ages 12–18), sibling groups, or hard-to-place youth as available
- Follow all enhanced reporting and collaboration guidelines with DHS

### **Enrollment Process:**

1. Interest Notification – Foster parents notify their regional DHS coordinator or licensing worker.
2. Eligibility Review – DHS evaluates the caregiver’s readiness, capacity, and licensing history.
3. Approval & Agreement – Homes sign an FHH Agreement outlining care standards and rate structure.
4. FHH Activation – Approved homes begin receiving youth under the hybrid model and enhanced rate.

**5d. Rate Continuity and Younger Youth Placements:** Once activated as a Foster Home Hybrid, the enhanced rate of \$3,500 per youth per month applies to each child placed—including youth under age 12—as long as:

- The home is actively housing **at least two youth aged 12 or older** under the FHH model
- Hybrid-level structure and supervision are maintained
- The home remains open to additional teen placements
- Placement decisions are made in coordination with DHS and stay within licensing limits

Additionally, once activated, FHH homes may continue to house **temporary or emergency placements** at a daily rate of **\$116 per day**. This provides significant cost savings to DHS compared to third-party hotel placements or one-on-one supervision contracts, while also supporting foster families who step up to accommodate last-minute emergency placements.

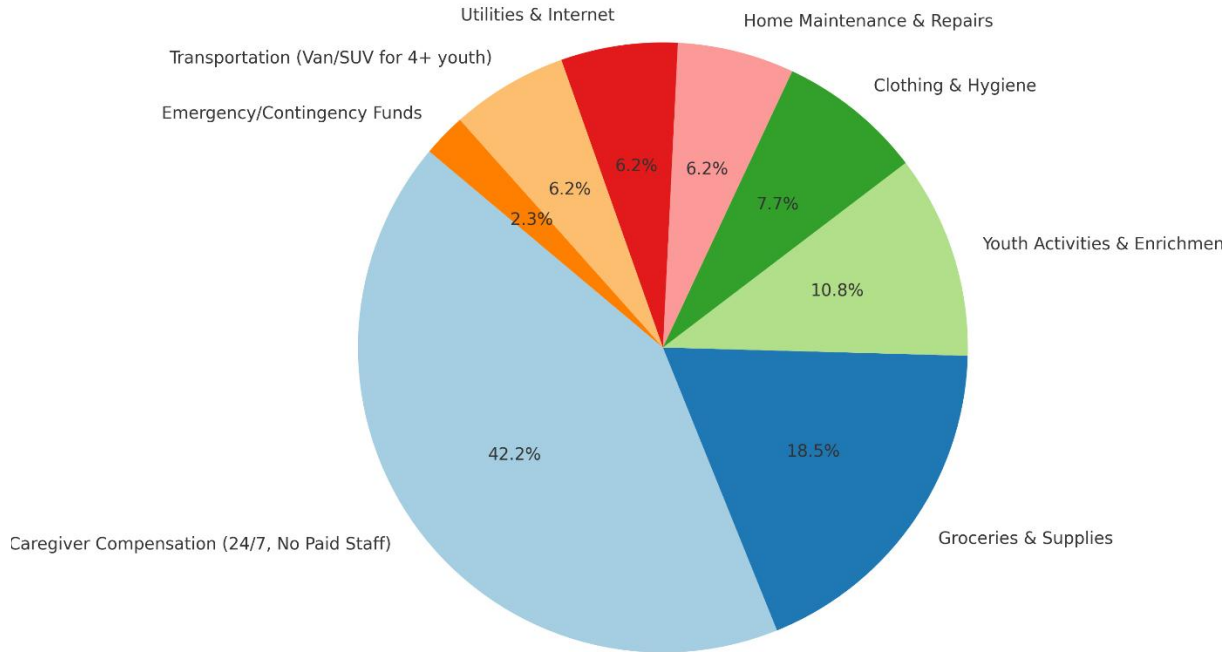
**5e. The FHH pilot is structured at a fixed rate of \$3,500/month per youth:** With a total of \$14,000/month for a home with four youth. The breakdown illustrates how the funds are allocated to cover the full scope of care, enrichment, transportation, and household support for





these youth.

Foster Home Hybrid – \$14,000 Monthly Budget for 4 Youth  
Caregiver-Led Model with No Paid Staff



**Note:** The Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) model is designed to support licensed caregivers providing full-time care for four youth. Whether the home is operated by a single adult or two adults, the expectations and responsibilities remain consistent: 24/7 supervision, transportation, school and court engagement, crisis response, and day-to-day care. Therefore, the per-child rate remains fixed at \$3,500/month to ensure equity, stability, and simplicity across participating homes.

#### 5f. Annual Retention Bonus (Optional Tiered Recommendation)

While not a current implementation priority, the Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) model includes the capacity to support pregnant and parenting teens along with their children when needed. These incentives recognize the consistent care required to keep youth in long-term family-based settings especially teens and sibling groups who often face multiple disruptions.

- \$3,000–\$5,000 per year per household for maintaining continuous FHH placements for 12+ months
- \$1,000–\$2,000 per year per youth for each youth who remains placed continuously for 12 months



This model not only supports caregiver retention and performance but also generates measurable cost savings for the state by reducing reliance on higher-cost group homes and emergency placements.

**5g. Teen Parent Placement (Optional Capacity Extension):** While not a current implementation priority, the Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) model includes the capacity to support pregnant and parenting teens along with their children when needed. These placements are among the most underserved in Maryland’s foster care system and often face significant placement barriers in traditional group or foster home settings.

To address this, FHH homes may opt into a Parenting Teen Tier, receiving an enhanced rate of \$6,500–\$7,000 per month per teen parent-child unit. This rate reflects dual-care responsibilities for both the teen and their child, as well as the increased supervision, safety planning, and support services required to keep both safely housed in a family setting.

- Childcare-related expenses (diapers, food, medical needs)
- Transportation and pediatric appointments
- Parenting education and life skills support
- Baby-proofing and safe sleeping accommodations
- Higher household impact and wear

Homes must maintain appropriate licensing and space to accommodate both youth and child, and complete an FHH-approved parenting teen training module if activated.

**Note:** Even when not actively serving parenting youth, inclusion of this tier ensures that the model remains responsive to DHS needs and aligned with federal Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) priorities around family preservation and placement stability.

**5h. Recommended DHS Action Steps for Early Implementation:** To ensure timely implementation and maximize both fiscal and human impact, we recommend the Maryland Department of Human Services consider the following immediate steps as part of the Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) pilot:

**1. Strategic Placement Review for Immediate Cost Savings:** In addition to new referrals, DHS could explore identifying current youth in group home placements who meet the FHH eligibility criteria and may benefit from transitioning to a family-based environment. This targeted review could:

- Improve stability and long-term outcomes for youth.
- Generate immediate cost savings by reducing reliance on high-cost congregate care.



To ensure transitions are youth-centered and trauma-informed, DHS could:

- Use youth-friendly surveys to assess willingness and readiness for family-based placement.
- Collaborate with group home providers to plan gradual, supportive transitions.
- Prioritize youth with the highest potential for success based on behavioral and emotional readiness.

This approach enables DHS to begin realizing measurable impact without waiting for new placement cycles.

**2. Targeted Recruitment of Participating Foster Homes:** To build capacity for the pilot, DHS could issue a targeted interest inquiry to currently licensed foster homes across the state to identify those willing to participate in the FHH model. These homes would:

- Receive structured training and support aligned with the FHH framework.
- Expand the available pool of qualified placements for youth transitioning out of group homes.

**3. Pilot Matching and Data Collection Framework:** To strengthen implementation and generate real-time insights:

- Conduct a rapid statewide assessment of existing group home placements to identify potential candidates for FHH placement.
- Implement a matching process that aligns eligible youth with interested FHH foster homes.
- Begin pilot-level data collection on placement stability, behavioral outcomes, and cost savings to inform future expansion.

**6b. Budget Summary:**

Description	Foster Home Hybrid	Group Home
Monthly Rate per Child	\$3,500	\$10,500 – \$12,000
Annual Rate per Child	\$42,000	\$126,000 – \$144,000
Monthly Rate for 5 Youth	\$17,500 (5 × \$3,500)	\$52,500 – \$60,000
Annual Rate for 5 Youth	\$210,000 (5 × \$42,000)	\$630,000 – \$720,000
<b>Estimated Monthly Savings for 5 Youth</b>	<b>\$35,000 – \$42,500</b>	—
<b>Estimated Annual Savings for 5 Youth</b>	<b>\$420,000 – \$510,000</b>	—

Summary: Caring for one youth in the FHH model costs **\$3,500/month**, compared to **\$10,500–\$12,000/month** in a group home.



- For a cohort of 5 youth, the **annual FHH cost is \$210,000**, versus **\$630,000–\$720,000** in group care.
- This yields an estimated **annual savings of \$420,000–\$510,000 per 5 youth**—while offering a family-based, trauma-informed alternative to institutional care.

**6c. Proposed Tiered Enhanced Rate Structure for Hard-to-Place Teens:** To complement the Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) pilot, we propose a tiered enhanced foster care rate structure specifically designed to support caregivers serving hard-to-place teens. This structure recognizes the increased time, emotional labor, and supervision required, while also promoting financial sustainability and program flexibility.

- **Tier 1 (1–2 Hard-to-Place Youth):**  
Caregivers supporting one or two youth receive \$2,500 per youth, per month. This tier reflects the intensive nature of small-cohort care, where fixed household costs and individual supervision needs remain high.
- **Tier 2 (3+ Hard-to-Place Youth):**  
Homes caring for three or more eligible youth qualify for the full Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) rate of \$3,500 per youth, per month, recognizing the cumulative demands and allowing for expanded life skills and wraparound support.
- **Transitional Grace Period:**  
Recognizing the natural fluctuations in foster care, we recommend a **60–90 day grace period** during which caregivers retain their current enhanced rate, even if the number of youth temporarily dips due to reunification, transfer, or aging out. This prevents unnecessary instability and allows homes to remain placement-ready without financial penalty.

**Policy Alignment:** This tiered structure directly addresses known gaps in Maryland’s current foster care reimbursement model. It advances the goals of the **Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)** and reinforces Maryland’s commitment to **cost-effective, family-centered, and outcomes-driven care**.

**7. Outcomes and Evaluation:** The Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) pilot will be evaluated through clear, measurable short-term and long-term performance indicators, aligned with DHS priorities and Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA) goals.

**Short-Term Objectives (First 6–12 Months):**

- **Maintain stable placements** of up to five youth in the pilot home for at least 6–12 months
- **Assess relational and emotional outcomes** through monthly caregiver and youth satisfaction surveys
- **Track behavioral progress**, including reduction in incidents and placement disruptions compared to prior settings



## Long-Term Objectives:

**Evaluation Tools & Reporting:** Monthly reports submitted to DHS will include:

- Placement stability metrics
- Behavioral incident tracking and resolution
- Youth engagement and goal progress
- Cost comparison data
- Key program strengths, challenges, and implementation insights

This structured evaluation framework ensures **transparency**, supports **continuous improvement**, and provides the data foundation needed to scale the FHH model across Maryland and beyond.

### 7a. Alignment with State and Federal Priorities:

The Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) model directly supports Governor Moore's call for **greater state efficiency, equity in care, and improved outcomes for underserved youth**. It also aligns with the **Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA)** by shifting resources away from institutional group settings toward community-based, family-centered care.

This model provides a **balanced, cost-effective alternative** to the two extremes currently straining the system: under-resourced foster homes and high-cost institutional placements. It offers a **scalable and sustainable** option that relieves pressure on foster families while reducing the state's financial burden.

**Scalability and Broader Impact:** Although piloted in Maryland, the FHH model offers a **replicable framework** that can be adapted by other states facing similar child welfare challenges. By combining the relational

strengths of family care with the structural supports found in group settings, the model addresses universal system gaps, including:

- Foster parent retention
- Youth placement stability
- Rising costs of congregate care
- Gaps in trauma-informed, wraparound support

If successfully implemented and evaluated, Maryland's FHH model could serve as a **national case study**, shaping future federal guidance and informing a broader policy shift toward **community-centered foster care solutions**.



## 8. Pilot Request and Implementation Plan:

**Pilot Site Description:** The proposed pilot will be hosted in my licensed foster home—a 4,973-square-foot residence located in the family-centered Two Rivers community of Odenton, Maryland. The home is situated in a safe, amenity-rich neighborhood featuring walking trails, swimming pools, indoor/outdoor basketball courts, tennis, volleyball, and pickleball facilities.

Youth placed through the Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) model will attend **Arundel Middle School** and **Arundel High School** in the Anne Arundel County Public Schools system, known for their strong academics and student support services. In addition to quality education, youth will have access to school clubs, recreational programs, and enriching community activities.

This stable, developmentally appropriate, and relationally rich setting is ideally suited for piloting a high-support family-based care model like the FHH.

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**9. Pilot Request:** I respectfully request the opportunity to pilot the **Foster Home Hybrid (FHH)** model in partnership with the **Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS)**. This innovative approach seeks to:

- Reduce reliance on costly group homes
- Expand the availability of family-based placements
- Improve outcomes for hard-to-place youth, especially teens and sibling groups

### **Readiness to Launch:**

I am fully prepared to begin implementation within **15–30 days of approval**, using my existing licensed foster home. The pilot will include a structured **life skills and personal development**

**curriculum** embedded into daily routines, designed to support youth growth and long-term success in a family setting.

### **Ongoing Reporting and Collaboration**

To ensure transparency, accountability, and ongoing learning, I will submit **monthly reports** to DHS containing:

- Placement stability and youth outcome metrics
- Youth and caregiver satisfaction assessments
- Financial comparisons to traditional placements
- Challenges encountered and responsive strategies
- Policy and programmatic recommendations for scaling



I welcome continued collaboration with DHS leadership, licensing staff, caseworkers, and program evaluators to assess impact, refine implementation, and help guide the model toward **broader statewide adoption**.

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**Conclusion:** The Foster Home Hybrid (FHH) model offers a practical, cost-effective, and compassionate alternative to institutional group care for Maryland’s hardest-to-place youth. By combining family-based placements with structured, group-home-level support, this pilot is designed to improve placement stability, reduce system costs, and promote better outcomes for youth and caregivers alike.

I am eager to partner with the Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) to launch this innovative approach. I believe it can serve as a **replicable model for statewide—and eventually national—implementation**. Thank you for your consideration and commitment to transforming the lives of Maryland’s most vulnerable youth.

We are confident this approach can:

- Reduce reliance on group care
- Increase utilization of licensed foster homes
- Deliver stronger long-term outcomes for youth

We welcome the opportunity to discuss next steps or host a site visit at the pilot foster home.

**Policy Alignment:** Federal and State Support for Family-Based Care Federal Guidance – Family First Prevention Services Act (FFPSA):

The 2018 FFPSA limits federal funding for congregate care and prioritizes family-centered, community-based alternatives. It encourages states to reduce institutional placements and expand preventative and family support services.

**Maryland’s Implementation:** Maryland was one of the first states to have its FFPSA plan approved by the U.S. Children’s Bureau (February 2020). The plan focuses on:

- Investing in evidence-based services
- Reducing reliance on group care
- Supporting families to safely care for children at home

Over the past decade, Maryland has reduced residential placements by over 50%. The FHH model directly supports this progress by offering a scalable, compliant, and forward-looking solution.

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## Next Steps

- **Request for Meeting:** Love, Balance, and Bloom respectfully requests a meeting with DHS leadership to discuss pilot approval and implementation.
- **Site Visit Invitation:** We invite DHS representatives to tour the proposed pilot foster home and explore the environment firsthand.
- **Ready for Launch:** Upon approval, we are prepared to provide detailed implementation plans, caregiver training modules, and evaluation tools to ensure accountability and success.

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## References

- Family First Prevention Services Act, 2018 (Public Law No. 115-123)
- U.S. Department of Health & Human Services, Children's Bureau (2019–2023)
- Annie E. Casey Foundation, *Kids Count Policy Report, 2023*
- Child Welfare Information Gateway, *Supporting and Retaining Foster Parents, 2021*
- Courtney, M.E. (2010). *Outcomes for Youth in Group vs. Family Care, Child Welfare Journal*
- California Evidence-Based Clearinghouse for Child Welfare – [www.cebc4cw.org](http://www.cebc4cw.org)

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## Top Questions from Stakeholders: What You Need to Know

### 1. What is the Foster Home Hybrid model?

The FHH model blends the personalized, family-based care of foster homes with structured supports typically found in group homes — such as enhanced rates, crisis coordination, and life skills programming — delivered by licensed caregivers within their own homes.

### 2. Who is eligible for placement in a Hybrid home?

Youth ages 12–18, including teens with mild to moderate behavioral needs, sibling groups, and those with prior placement disruptions.

### 3. How does this differ from traditional foster care?

Traditional foster care typically involves 1–2 children per home with limited support. The FHH model supports 3–5 youth per home, includes enhanced funding, trauma-informed training, and structured skill development.

### 4. What does the \$3,500/month rate cover?

It covers all youth-related costs: housing, food, clothing, transportation, enrichment, and 24/7 supervision. Foster parents also absorb expenses like utilities, household wear, and administrative responsibilities.

### 5. Why is the rate the same for single caregivers and couples?

The model is youth-centered. Regardless of household makeup, the responsibilities





transportation, court attendance, crisis response, and daily care remain the same. The flat rate ensures equity and simplicity.

**6. Is this rate higher than regular foster care?**

Yes, but still far below group home costs (\$10,500–\$12,000/month). It reflects the real cost of providing care to youth who would otherwise be placed in institutional settings.

**7. Will this model save the state money?**

Yes. Even with enhanced caregiver stipends, FHH saves Maryland over \$400,000 per 5-youth cohort annually compared to group home placements.

**8. How is youth safety ensured in this model?**

Hybrid homes follow the same licensing, safety, and inspection standards as group homes — including unannounced visits, youth feedback tools, and emergency response protocols.

**9. How will placement quality be monitored?**

Caregivers submit reports monthly. DHS maintains oversight via licensing inspections, case reviews, and structured youth outcome tracking.

**10. What happens during placement disruptions or emergencies?**

DHS coordinates emergency reassignments. Caregivers have access to 24/7 crisis response and transition support.

**11. Can a caregiver really manage 4–5 teens safely?**

Yes, when properly trained and supported. Caregivers are equipped with crisis management tools and wraparound resources to ensure emotional and physical safety.

**12. What supports are provided to Hybrid caregivers?**

Hybrid caregivers receive trauma-informed training, coaching, on-call support, and a structured life skills curriculum to implement with youth.

**13. How does the model prevent caregiver burnout?**

Supports include respite care, coaching, peer networking, and emergency backup planning. The financial stability it offers also reduces stress.

**14. Does the model require a new license type?**

No. It operates under Maryland's existing foster care license with supplemental training and reporting requirements.

**15. Will this model affect existing foster families or agencies?**

No. It complements traditional foster care and fills a gap for youth who otherwise face group home or hotel placements.



**16. How will success be measured?**

Monthly data collection will track placement stability, youth progress, caregiver satisfaction, and cost comparisons to group care.

**17. How soon can this pilot launch?**

The first Hybrid home is ready to launch within 15–30 days of approval.

**18. How would this pilot be funded, and is legislative alignment required?**

This pilot can be supported using existing state funds currently allocated to group home and QRTP placements. We respectfully request DHS leadership to authorize this pilot under its discretionary pilot authority and to earmark funds from within its institutional care budget.

Should additional policy flexibility or legislative authorization be required, we are open to working collaboratively with state leaders to support a budget amendment or temporary waiver for pilot purposes. This approach ensures no new funds are needed upfront — only a strategic reallocation of existing dollars to a more effective model.

## Appendix A: Source Documents

A.1 – Maryland QRTP Rate Data

- Maryland Interagency Rates Committee (IRC) – FY2025 Provider Rate Table

<https://marylandpublicschools.org/programs/Documents/Special-Ed/IRC/FY-2025-Interagency-Rates-Committee-Provider-Rates-RCC-12.24-A.pdf>

A.2 – DHS Budget References

- FY26 Operating Budget – Department of Human Services (Social Services)

<https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/pubs/budgetfiscal/2026fy-budget-docs-operating-N00B-DHS-Social-Services.pdf>