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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
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**SB 924 Maryland Child Abduction Prevention Act**

Chairman Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Senate Bill 924 as amended would set up a process to prevent a parent from removing a child from the United States with intent to obstruct another parent's custodial rights. Improvements in law enforcement response times, legislative initiatives, and more sophisticated strategies for recovering children have led to improved success rates for domestic family abductions, which typically resolve in less than 6 months. But international family abductions take an *average* of 9 months to resolve, and many families struggle for years to return their children home to the U.S. SB 924 would allow the court in a custody or visitation proceeding, to order that either party provide written notice of at least 90 days when they intend to travel outside of the United States and would require a hearing on an expedited basis if necessary. This mirrors the process used if one party would like to relocate.

Senate Bill 924 also authorizes a court to order abduction prevention measures if the court finds evidence establishing a credible risk of abduction of the child using the Uniform Child Custody Jurisdiction and Enforcement Act (UCCJEA). UCCJEA provides states with a tool for deterring both domestic and international child abductions by parents and people acting on behalf of the parents by allowing the court to impose measures designed to prevent child abduction both before and after a court has entered a custody decree.

Today you will hear from individuals who have struggled with the abduction of a child and the challenges they face putting the safeguards in place to remain in their children's lives.

Federal law prohibits a parent from removing a child from the United States or retaining a child in another country with intent to obstruct another parent's custodial rights. U.S. Customs and Border Protection, in conjunction with the U.S. Department of State and other federal agencies, has established a program that seeks to prevent the departure of a child from the United States when presented with a valid, enforceable court order that prohibits the child's removal from the country (the Prevent Abduction Program).

I respectfully request a favorable report on Senate Bill 924.