

HB1231 - Family Law – Authorization for a Minor to Marry

Presented to the Hon. Luke Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee
February 20, 2020 1:00 p.m.

POSITION: OPPOSE

As the President of a women's organization, I obviously agree that no young woman should be forced to marry. However, speaking personally and not for my organization, I oppose this legislation. I married at the age of 16 in the State of Maryland, and it was my choice to do so. At that time if you were pregnant and wanted to marry, you did not need parental consent.

I lived in an abusive household and was treated by my parents as a free nanny and housekeeper. They even had the nerve to ask me to remain at home after marriage to care for my siblings but I declined. I wanted very much to be emancipated. It may be hard to imagine but I had less responsibility with a husband and new baby than I did living with my parents. I had four younger siblings that I had to care for as well as preparing dinner every weekday evening for 7 people. I was required to clean the house every other day, do laundry, iron and share my room with the baby. No teenager should bear such a burden.

This law needs to provide for a teenager in a similar situation who wants to be emancipated. It also needs to provide an easy way to get a bypass from needing consent. Going before a judge is not acceptable in my opinion. For a teen woman this would be difficult and frightening. She may not have transportation to a court or anyone to take her or give her moral support.

Please stand up for teen women who want to marry and oppose this bill as currently presented.

Sandy Bell

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