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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS OF HOUSE BILL 748**

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The House of Ruth is a non-profit organization providing shelter, counseling, and legal services to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. The House of Ruth Domestic Violence Legal Clinic has offices in Baltimore City, Prince George's County and Montgomery County. House Bill 748, as amended, changes current family law to require a court to make certain findings on the record if it is going to order custody or visitation in a case where a child has been abused, and requires the court to articulate the factors it considered in making a custody determination. **We urge the House Judiciary Committee to amend and report favorably report on House Bill 748.**

HB 748, as amended, makes two important changes to existing custody law. Both of these changes require the court to articulate on the record its reasons for arriving at a particular decision in a custody or visitation proceeding.

Under current law pursuant to Family Law Article § 9-101, the court cannot grant custody or visitation to a party if the child has been abused or neglected by the party unless the court specifically finds that there is no likelihood of further child abuse or neglect. HB 748 would require a court to specifically find that there is no likelihood of further child abuse or neglect and state with specificity the reasons for the finding. In addition, HB 748 requires a court in any custody or visitation proceeding in determining the best interest of the child to articulate its findings of fact and any factor that the court considers on the record.

The House of Ruth believes that these two requirements will provide judges with a framework to carefully consider the individual facts of each case and analyze them in the context of a child's safety and best interests. In addition, these requirements will help both parties to better understand the reasons for the court's ruling.

**The House of Ruth urges the House Judiciary Committee to amend and report favorably on House Bill 748.**