

Ways and Means Committee
Room 131
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 22, 2022

Mrs. Victoria Bako
5901 Medora Rd.
Linthicum Heights, MD 21090

To the Ways and Means Committee:

As a mother to four, going on five, children, I ask you to give a favorable report to HB0618, Maryland Parental Rights Act. Any woman who has ever carried a child knows that she is making a sacrifice of love with her body to her child: the physical stress, the pain that sometimes accompanies pregnancy, the trials (sometimes life-threatening, as in one of my own deliveries) of labor and delivery. As mothers, we do these things out of love for our children.

But the selfless sacrifices don't stop at birth. As parents, both mother and father (whether both are in the same home or not) take pains and consideration about how to teach a child pro-social behavior, feed them, clothe them, shelter them, without expecting the same in return. Being a parent is about serving the good of the child, and there is no doubt that the natural caregiver of any child is his or her parents.

The caregiver of a child is not like a healthcare provider who, more than likely, is a virtual stranger to both child and parents. The caregiver of a child is not ordinarily the State. Has the State spilled its blood for any of our children? Has the State stayed up late at night nursing a sick child, changing soiled bedsheets and consoling a child? Has the State ever had to make the hard call to say "no" to a child who demands too many cookies at mealtime? I don't think so. Neither has my child's doctor. Nor has a school nurse, as lovely as these people may be.

Because of the natural bonds of love that a parent has with a child, it should always be first assumed that a parent has a child's best interest at heart when a parent makes a decision about the child's medical care. Every parent has a right to know what a healthcare provider is recommending to their child. Parents have poured their sweat, blood, tears and heart into a child, and there could be no greater betrayal by our state than to allow strangers to make these intimate decisions with our children.

Please give a favorable report to HB0618 and keep our parental rights sacred and honored.

Thank you,

Mrs. Victoria Bako