

NICK CHARLES  
Legislative District 25  
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Judicial Proceedings Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**SB663: Child Custody - Rebuttable Presumption of Joint Custody**  
Favorable

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

For the record, I am Senator Nick Charles testifying in support of Senate Bill 663. SB663 establishes a rebuttable presumption in child custody proceedings that joint legal custody and joint physical custody for approximately equal periods of time are in the best interests of a child. It authorizes the court to award sole custody based on reasonable and significant evidence that a joint custody arrangement is not in the best interests of the child.

This Bill is about ensuring our custody courts are truly operating under what will be most advantageous to Maryland families. If there is not sufficient evidence shown that one parent cannot contribute to the best interests of the child, what is the basis to limit the access that a child will have to both guardians? By embracing joint custody arrangements, we acknowledge the importance of both parents in a child's life. Published in the Journal of Family Psychology by the American Psychological Association, "Children in joint custody arrangements had less behavior and emotional problems, had higher self-esteem, better family relations and school performance than children in sole custody arrangements".

As we hear countless Bills this Session and ideas about how to transform the lives of our juveniles, I truly believe that we must put more focus on fixing our family court system. This Bill is not just about legalities, it's about the emotional well-being of our children. By promoting joint custody arrangements, we are not just ensuring fairness in the courtroom, but we are also giving children the opportunity to maintain strong bonds with both parents. It's about creating stability and security in their lives, something that every child deserves.

I urge a favorable report.

Thank you,  
Senator Nick Charles

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Nick Charles".