
By: **Delegates McComas, Aumann, Barkley, Bartlett, Burns, Cadden, Carter, V. Clagett, Cluster, Conway, Cryor, Eckardt, Edwards, Elmore, Frank, Haddaway, Heller, Hogan, Impallaria, Jameson, Jennings, Kach, Kohl, Kullen, Levy, McDonough, McKee, Myers, O'Donnell, Ramirez, Ross, Rudolph, Shank, Shewell, Smigiel, Sossi, Stull, Trueschler, F. Turner, and Vallario**

Introduced and read first time: February 10, 2006
Assigned to: Judiciary

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Task Force on Child Custody Decisions**

3 FOR the purpose of establishing a Task Force on Child Custody Decisions; providing
4 for certain membership of the Task Force; requiring the Governor to designate
5 the chair of the Task Force; specifying the duties of the Task Force; providing
6 staff support for the Task Force; requiring the Task Force to report to the
7 Governor and the General Assembly on or before certain dates; prohibiting a
8 member of the Task Force from receiving certain compensation; authorizing a
9 member of the Task Force to be reimbursed for certain expenses; providing for
10 the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Task Force on Child
11 Custody Decisions.

12 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF
13 MARYLAND, That:

14 (a) There is a Task Force on Child Custody Decisions.

15 (b) The Task Force shall be composed of:

16 (1) one member of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee,
17 appointed by the President of the Senate;

18 (2) one member of the House Judiciary Committee, appointed by the
19 Speaker of the House;

20 (3) two circuit court judges, appointed by the Chief Judge of the Court of
21 Appeals;

22 (4) two family law masters, appointed by the Chief Judge of the Court of
23 Appeals;

1 (5) the following members appointed by the Governor in consultation
2 with the President of the Senate and the Speaker of the House:

3 (i) one representative of the Maryland State Bar Association;

4 (ii) one representative of a domestic violence advocacy group;

5 (iii) one representative of Father's United or a father's rights group;

6 (iv) one representative from the Women's Law Center;

7 (v) one educator on domestic law;

8 (vi) two licensed mental health workers who have experience with
9 family law or child custody cases; and

10 (vii) two litigants whose cases have been completed.

11 (c) The Governor shall designate the chair of the Task Force.

12 (d) The Department of Family Administration in the Administrative Office of
13 the Courts shall provide staff support to the Task Force.

14 (e) A member of the Task Force may not receive compensation for serving on
15 the Task Force, but is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard
16 State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

17 (f) The Task Force shall:

18 (1) study how to make the establishment and modification of orders
19 more flexible;

20 (2) study how to reduce the number of costly legal battles in child
21 custody and visitation proceedings;

22 (3) study how to eliminate the adverse effects of child custody and
23 visitation litigation;

24 (4) study how to improve future relations between the parties;

25 (5) study how to maximize the involvement of both parents in raising,
26 educating, and nurturing their children;

27 (6) study how to create healthier families;

28 (7) study the standards relating to statutory and case management
29 reform to improve the quality of decisions in child custody cases;

30 (8) study the accountability of family courts when using interventions
31 such as temporary restraining orders and protective orders;

1 (9) study the cost-effectiveness and increased accountability of
2 guardians ad litem and other providers;

3 (10) study mandatory mediation for all family court proceedings;

4 (11) study the presumption of joint custody; and

5 (12) make recommendations regarding the most effective manner in
6 which to facilitate cooperative decision making by parents involved in child custody
7 and visitation proceedings as it relates to their children.

8 (g) The Task Force shall:

9 (1) be appointed, organized, and begin its deliberations no later than
10 December 1, 2006;

11 (2) submit an interim report of its findings and recommendations to the
12 Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, to the
13 General Assembly on or before December 1, 2007; and

14 (3) submit a final report of its findings and any recommendation for
15 legislation to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government
16 Article, to the General Assembly, on or before December 1, 2008.

17 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect
18 October 1, 2006. It shall remain effective for a period of 2 years and 8 months and, at
19 the end of May 31, 2009, with no further action required by the General Assembly,
20 this Act shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.