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Dear Member of the House and Senate Judiciary Committees,

My name is Morgan Gable, and my wife and I are currently first-time foster parents in Baltimore City. We currently have a wonderful 5-year-old little boy living in our home who came to us 6 months ago. He is currently thriving in our neighborhood public school (Wolfe Street Academy). He has perfect attendance and has made many friends.

He has had a court date every single month since coming into our lives. At each court date, there's the possibility that the Judge will decide that he will be going back to his biological mother's home immediately after the court proceedings. On more than one court date, we have been left entirely in the dark about what occurred. On one such instance, we had zero communication from anyone in DSS for 4 days after the hearing. Imagine what is like waiting for news for 4 days wondering whether or not the little boy that you have been caring for will be staying with you another day. Finally, after 4 days, his attorney told us that the hearing had been canceled because his caseworker was ill. For 4 days, I looked at my phone non-stop, waiting for a call, a text, anything. The agony brought on by this experience is hard to explain to someone who hasn't been in this situation.

I am asking that you support House Bill 369 and Senate Bill 586. This legislation allows foster, pre-adoptive, and kinship parents to have a seat at the table in court. Expecting a foster parent to care for a foster child as their own and then not being privy to the information that occurs in court (let alone be notified about when the court dates are scheduled!) is absurd and cannot be allowed to continue. This legislation would allow foster parents to act as an intervenor in court, if they choose to do so.

Foster parents deserve the right to attend court and participate in court proceedings that affect their foster child. Please support House Bill 369 and Senate Bill 586. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Morgan Gable