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February 19, 2020

The Honorable Chair Luke Clippinger, Esquire
Members of the Judiciary Committee
House of Delegates
Lowe House Office Building
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: HB 946

Dear Members of the Judiciary Committee,

Please accept this written testimony in support of HB 946 – Child Support Guidelines. I am a practicing family law attorney in Maryland with 30 years of experience. I am also a Fellow of the American Academy of Matrimonial Lawyers and long-standing member of the Maryland Bar Association Family Law Section. I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of the High-Income Subcommittee of the Child Support Guidelines Advisory Committee of which I was a Co-Chair with James Milko, Esquire. Both of us are Past Chairs of the Family and Juvenile Law Section Council of the Maryland State Bar Association.

The enactment of the Child Support Guidelines has been a great benefit for Maryland families. It has provided consistency, predictability and has substantially reduced litigation regarding child support, saving the litigants, and the citizens of Maryland. The current Child Support Guideline income matrix maxes out at \$15,000 combined income per month, for a family total of \$180,000 per year. There is little guidance from the courts on cases that fall above the guidelines, therefore leaving these families with uncertainty and unfortunately, litigation. Maryland, as one of the highest income earning states in the country, has a large number of families earning in excess of \$180,000 combined income per year. These families are not being treated equally or fairly. Anecdotally, we have seen awards of child support with similar incomes vary greatly, as much as \$2,500 per month.

A simple extrapolation of the current guidelines is problematic because it depends on whose model you use to extrapolate, none of which have been approved by the legislature or the courts. In addition, if a "straight line" extrapolation is adopted, it is not

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based on economic data, or a true analysis of the child's best interest often resulting in ridiculous and unsubstantiated numbers. Our Sub-Committee analyzed the laws in all 50 states, the economic information provided by the U.S. and Maryland governments as well as the input from many organizations involved in the practice and implementation of child support laws. In addition, we canvassed practicing attorneys in this field. The proposed legislation provides Guideline child support for families with combined income of \$30,000 per month or \$360,000 per year. This will cover a vast majority of Maryland families and will close the gaping hole resulting from the current law.

As legislators, it is your duty to pass laws that are beneficial and assist the citizens of Maryland. HB 946 does just that, it will reduce litigation, and bring consistency and predictability to the awards of child support and for the children of our state.

Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,



Mary Roby Sanders

MRS\hs

CC: James Milko, Esquire