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**TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS OF HOUSE BILL 1114**

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The House of Ruth is a non-profit organization providing shelter, counseling, and legal services to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. The House of Ruth Domestic Violence Legal Clinic has offices in Baltimore City, Prince George's County and Montgomery County. House Bill 1114 requires the court, in determining the appropriate allocation of legal decision making or parenting time between the parties, to consider certain factors. **We urge the House Judiciary Committee to amend and favorably report on House Bill 1114.**

HB 1114 codifies the factors that courts must consider when making decisions about how to allocate custody and visitation. House of Ruth believes it is important to provide a statutory framework for the factors that a court must consider when making decisions involving children. We believe that the language used to set forth the factors in House Bill 1328 is preferable to that in HB 1114 because HB 1328 substitutes "legal decision making" and "parenting time" for the more traditional "custody" and "visitation" terminology, thus providing a much-needed update to the way people describe and think of the rights and responsibilities of parents in regard to their children. In addition, the language of HB 1328 mirrors that used in the newly implemented parenting plan, providing further consistency to litigants. Finally, HB 1328 includes several factors which we believe are important to a court's determination of the best interests of the child.

HB 1114 is laudable in its overall goal of codifying the factors a court should consider with respect to custody and visitation and encompasses many of the factors set forth in HB 1328. If this Committee moves forward with HB 1114, the House of Ruth proposes the following amendments:

- 1) p. 2, lines 25-26 – replace with "protect the child from the negative effects of any conflict between the parties;
- 2) p. 3, lines 12-14 – delete;
- 3) p. 3, lines 18-19 – delete.

**The House of Ruth urges the House Judiciary Committee to amend and report favorably on House Bill 1114.**