

Grandparents Visitation

House Bill 973: Family Law - Grandparent Visitation

Hearing Date: March 4, 2021

Judiciary Committee

Good afternoon Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary, and Committee Members. My name is Jessica Thomas and I am testifying in favor of HB 0973. I am the grandmother of a beautiful soon to be three year old boy, Jaden. My son Justin was Jaden's father. Justin was murdered leaving a party on December 14, 2019, he was only 19yrs old. My grandson Jaden is the only piece of my son that myself and my family have left and we cherish him. Jaden and I have built the most loving, beautiful relationship over the last few years; especially in this last year while he's a little older and starting to grow into a little individual. I have been present for Jaden from the first day that he was born, he is the light of my life. I was there for all of his first, first crawl, first step, first tooth, first day of daycare; and now I've been denied access to my only grandchild. I can no longer see him, talk to him, hug or kiss him, which has been emotionally difficult for me as I'm sure it is for Jaden as well. My son is no longer here to invoke his custodial rights and share his son with his family.

Any time that my grandson's mom decides that she doesn't want us to see him anymore we must endure forced separation from him until she feels like allowing us to see him again. For this reason I fully support house bill 973 that was introduced by Delegate Chanel Branch. The introduction of this Bill would give myself and other grandparents in my predicament the support to foster healthy relationships in love with their grandchildren and build family bonds beyond the limited visitation or access that the estranged parent will allow.

Under the current Maryland Law grandparents have no rights to their grandchildren. And the only backing from the court will come in cases of distress, neglect, or abuse of the child. Grandparents should not only have the opportunity to get regular access and love from their grandchildren through traumatic experiences.

I implored you to support bill 973 as the passing of this bill will mean a great deal too many grandparents that have been wrongfully and unwillingly estranged from their grandchildren. The bill will also promote strong bonds, healthy relationships, family heritage and between grandparents and their grandchildren. Thank you for your time. I ask that you please give HB 0973 a favorable report.

Respectfully submitted,

Jessica Thomas