

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CONFERENCE
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hon. Mary Ellen Barbera
Chief Judge

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
410-260-1523
RE: House Bill 808
Juvenile Law – Procedure – Appearance by Video Conference
DATE: February 3, 2021
(2/18)
POSITION: Support

The Maryland Judiciary supports House Bill 808. This bill would amend Courts & Judicial Proceedings Article (CJP), § 3-8A-13(f) by adding a new Paragraph (f) providing that in any proceeding under Subtitle 8A, “the court may permit the child to appear by video conference.” The bill does not establish any processes or requirements for those video conferences.

The bill would put in statute current practice, consistent with Chief Judge Mary Ellen Barbera’s administrative orders, of holding at least some proceedings remotely and with the child participating by video conference. In addition, it is consistent with Title 2, Chapter 800 of the MD Rules governing Remote Electronic Participation.

The bill makes it discretionary for the court to permit the child to appear by video conference. The Judiciary particularly agrees with the permissive language, believing that the court should not be compelled to permit the child to participate by video conference.

Permitting the child to participate by video conference may increase the number of hearings, decrease disruption of children’s school attendance and activities, and, indeed, move the court closer to operating in a trauma-informed manner.

cc. Hon. Keith Haynes
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O’Connor