

**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 476  
Family Law – Grandparent Visitation  
**DATE:** February 1, 2021  
(2/4)  
**POSITION:** Oppose

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The Maryland Judiciary opposes House Bill 476. This bill alters the circumstances under which an equity court may grant visitation rights to a grandparent of a child.

This bill is unnecessary. Maryland law already allows grandparents to ask the court for visitation or custody of their grandchildren. If enacted, the new verbiage in this bill would introduce opportunities for confusion. Further, current law permits the court to grant grandparents visitation over the objection of a parent if they can show the parent is *unfit* or exceptional circumstances exist. Section (2)(iv) of this bill omits the former.

cc. Hon. Haven Shoemaker  
Judicial Council  
Legislative Committee  
Kelley O'Connor