



**TESTIMONY FOR SB0029**  
**Family Law - Emancipation of a Minor and Authorization to Marry**

**Bill Sponsor:** Senator Elfreth

**Committee:** Judicial Proceedings

**Organization Submitting:** Maryland Legislative Coalition

**Person Submitting:** Cecilia Plante, co-chair

**Position:** FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0029 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

It is beyond belief that a 16-year-old girl can be married off to a 40-year-old man, who can then rape her and she is unable to defend herself or divorce him until she is 18 years old. This is what we allow. Since 2015, we have allowed 13 girls below the age of 16 to be married and almost 500 girls below the age of 18.

They don't have any say in what happens to them, and what happens after the marriage is rape, pure and simple. Their lives are destroyed by the time they are 18 and can legally get themselves out of that situation. Usually, they have young children although they are still children themselves and cannot financially leave.

We MUST put an end to this!

We not only support this bill; we encourage this committee to pass it with alacrity and stand up for the children of Maryland. We recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.