

Testimony in Support of SB-0383
The Maryland Child Abduction Prevention Act
Spoken Version
February, 2023
Davin Sloan

Good afternoon.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today.

My name is Davin Sloan.

I am here in support of SB-0383, the Maryland Child Abduction Prevention Act.

I seek your help to create meaningful protections for our children, young Marylanders who are at-risk of international parental child abduction, and to bring awareness to the devastating consequences of “International Parental Child Abduction”.

I am the proud father of a delightful daughter, now nearly 9 years old. She is my only child.

She was born here at Anne Arundel Medical Center. She is a US citizen, a Marylander, and an Annapolitan.

My daughter was, and is, a survivor of International Parental Child Abduction.

In 2016, while married, I travelled with my daughter and foreign-born wife for what I thought was to be a long summer vacation in the Czech Republic.

I discovered, to my horror and anguish that my child’s mother had a different plan, and unbeknownst to me, had no intention of returning home to the United States with our child.

From September 2016, my daughter was unlawfully and wrongfully retained in the Czech Republic for nearly 3 years, 1012 agonizing days.

For the first 2 years, my contact with my daughter was limited to a total of 16 hours.

In 2017, I initiated a Hague proceeding seeking my daughter’s return home.

Pursuing my daughter’s return required 5 separate trips to the Czech Republic, a total of 189 days overseas. Few parents could manage this, much less the tremendous costs.

I have now spent over \$250,000 fighting for my daughters return and well-being. Sadly, most of the cost has been incurred in MD family courts.

Despite the Czech Appeal Court and Constitutional Court rulings requiring my daughter's return to the US, under the Hague treaty, the taking parent would not comply.

In July 2019, the Czech court moved forward with an enforcement action. Police, social workers, and court officials arrived at the house where my daughter was held and had to physically remove her.

This was an extremely traumatic experience for my daughter.

I am one of the lucky ones. On July 04, 2019, I was finally able to return, with my daughter, to our home in Annapolis Maryland, almost three years after our planned return.

However, upon my return to the US with my daughter, I encountered grave and unexpected obstacles.

There is currently no framework in Maryland to prevent re-abduction, or to accept or grant comity to Hague Return Judgments.

Foremost, our family courts must be made aware of the loss of jurisdiction that occurs the moment the airplane wheels leave the runway. From then on, enforcement of US custody orders is not possible. This is paramount in understanding the need for protections for our children.

Family courts should be required to enroll at-risk children into the federal CBP Prevent Abduction Program, which would help to prevent unauthorized departures.

There is an urgent need for uniform and automatic procedures to protect children from abduction and re-abduction, when there are known and credible risks.

Secondly, requiring and facilitating "mirror agreements" with foreign courts and authorities, would help ensure enforcement of a US custody or travel agreement.

My daughter remains at risk. Among well-established risk factors, parents who have previously abducted present the single greatest risk of re-abduction.

The risk factors shared by the State department, US justice Dept., NCMEC and others should be used by our family courts to assess risk.

US Congress and most experts recognize Parental Child Abduction as a form of child abuse.

Incredibly, in Anne Arundel County, abduction is not recognized as a form of child abuse. This must be changed.

Abducted children suffer a multitude of short and long-term psychological damages, not to mention the damage to their future, with parents having to spend a lifetime of savings on legal fees, rather than college tuition.

Clearly, it is a worthy goal to focus on preventing abductions from occurring in the first place.

I ask for your help to pass this legislation so that my daughter, and others like her, can be better protected under the laws of this state, in which she was born.