

Testimony in favor of HB267
February 9, 2023

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Dear Honorable Members of the Maryland General Assembly,

My name is Arif Syed Ahmad and I am a proud parent and immigrant to this great state of Maryland. I stand before you today as a father who has experienced the heartbreak and trauma of what is determined as parental abduction, where my child remains at high risk of being abducted internationally.

Parental abduction can be referred to the act of a parent unlawfully taking, retaining, or concealing a child from the other parent, family members, or legal custodians with the intention of depriving them of their rightful parental responsibilities and time with the child.

For over three years, I had the privilege of raising my child as a stay-at-home father. Unfortunately, almost 3 years ago, my child was taken away, and I have been struggling ever since to locate and regain custody.

Parental abduction, whether domestic or international, is a serious issue affecting countless families across Maryland and the country. The lack of clear legislation, combined with the discretionary use of response by authorities, has led to an increase in these cases and placed children at risk

As a parent, there is nothing more traumatizing and devastating than being separated from your child, and then to face significant difficulties in attempting to secure the child's return, where the child's safety and well-being remains at risk with serious emotional and psychological harm that will have an impact on the rest of their life's.

I feel the current system is failing families like mine, and I urge the Maryland General Assembly to take action to better protect the rights and safety of children.

I strongly support House Bill 267, which aims to improve the response to and prevention of domestic and international parental abduction cases. I urge you to pass this bill and help bring an end to the trauma and uncertainty faced by families like mine.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Arif Syed Ahmad