

January 26, 2023

Rachel London
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Ellicott City, Maryland 21043

William Atwell
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Baltimore, Maryland 21224

Re: HB14 – Family Law – Grounds for Divorce

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

We write this letter in full support of House Bill 14. In June 2011, we agreed we could no longer be married and had to separate. It was a mutual decision, based on many, well thought out reasons. While it is never an easy situation, but the fact that we could not separate our finances or our residence at the time, made ours more difficult.

We were a working, middle class family with one child, who was almost four (4) at the time. Our combined salaries supported our home and our family. While we knew we had to separate and eventually get divorced, we also knew we had a lot to figure out. We moved into separate bedrooms and continued to share our home and our finances.

During that time, we executed a separation agreement that outlined any potential contested issues, including child custody, child support, and the division of property and assets. We were prepared to fully separate our lives and move on. Yet we could not. We had to wait.

We even attempted to sell the house so that we could afford to move out and on to our own, separate lives. Unfortunately, after 4 months, we had to take the house off the market and make another difficult decision that would affect us both financially. William moved out in October 2011 – four months after we mutually agreed to separate and executed a separation agreement.

Only then could the one-year timeframe for an absolute divorce based on mutual consent begin. We recognize previous changes to this statute to expand the definition of mutual consent would help now; however, the reality is that couples sometimes cannot separate their home and finances. Recognizing that couples sometimes have no choice but to live under the same roof would go a long way.

In the end, we waited a year, filed jointly for an uncontested divorce and proceeded through the process until we received our final divorce decree in November 2012. Thankfully, we had already moved on, rebuilt separate lives, and established a new routine for our son. Nevertheless, we had to wait. Allowing us to file for absolute divorce when we were ready more than a year before would have decreased the stress, burden, and uncertainty.

We get along, co-parent our son while living the separate lives we so desired. We urge your support of HB 14 to allow couples like us, who know what they want and need for their families, to accomplish it without undergoing the stress, burden, and financial uncertainty we did.

Sincerely,



Rachel London (District 12A)



William Atwell (District 46)