

NICOLE A. WILLIAMS, ESQ.  
Legislative District 22  
Prince George's County

Judiciary Committee

Chair, Public Safety Subcommittee

Vice Chair, Democratic Caucus

Chair, Prince George's  
County House Delegation



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 15, 2024

The Honorable Luke Clippinger

Chair of the House Judiciary Committee

6 Bladen Street, Room 101

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

House Bill 833

Good afternoon, Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and the members of the House Judiciary Committee. I am Delegate Nicole Williams, and I will testify in favor of House Bill 833, also known as **Children in Need of Assistance - Parents in Substance Use Disorder Treatment**. This bill would allow children to be placed with their parents or guardians while they receive specific substance use disorder treatment. Proper placement would be done when a child's parent demonstrates the child's best interest, the child gets proper care and attention, and there is no emergency. This bill also requires social services to file a report with a court if the child is not placed with the parent, describing the difficulties experienced and the efforts taken to find a placement for the child.

When parents are removed from caring for their children, even for as short as three weeks during the postpartum period, parents can develop a sense of detachment from their children. This causes parents not to understand the proper way to treat and care for their babies, which they would have developed if they had been placed together from the moment of birth or if separated after birth. The sense of love and emotional attachment for their child may unintentionally decrease tremendously. The children involved do not deserve to suffer from separation from their parents because the parents and guardians are trying their best to ensure they can show up for their children when they are at their healthiest and to provide their kids with a nourishing future. Keeping children with their parents and guardians, even while undergoing specific substance abuse treatments, will ensure that the detachment feeling does not take place, overall benefitting the child and the parent.

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Additionally, children who are separated from their mothers at any time within the first two years of their lives show higher signs of aggressive behavior. Because children unintentionally do not receive the same emotional resources from their parents, they can demonstrate signs of aggression starting at the age of three. This negatively affects children's futures as they could then begin to engage in other unhealthy behaviors.

Passing this legislation would be in the best interest of all individuals involved, parents and children. Parents are benefited by being able to remain with their children while they overcome their struggles. Having an individual to care for incentivizes parents to better themselves and provide for their youth. Moreover, while this displacement may be a short period, it will benefit children in the long run as they will grow up constantly experiencing the healthy love of their parents.

For these reasons, I urge this committee to give a favorable report on House Bill 833.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'Nicole Williams', with a long horizontal flourish extending to the right.

Delegate Nicole A. Williams, Esq.