

MARYLAND JUDICIAL CONFERENCE
GOVERNMENT RELATIONS AND PUBLIC AFFAIRS

Hon. Matthew J. Fader
Chief Justice

187 Harry S. Truman Parkway
Annapolis, MD 21401

MEMORANDUM

TO: House Judiciary Committee
FROM: Legislative Committee
Suzanne D. Pelz, Esq.
410-260-1523
RE: House Bill 508
Children – Labor Trafficking
DATE: January 31, 2024
(2/15)
POSITION: Oppose, as drafted

The Maryland Judiciary opposes House Bill 508, as drafted. This bill would amend the Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article to add labor trafficking to the CINA definition and to add instances in which a parent or guardian engages in or facilitates labor trafficking to the list of circumstances in which the court may waive DSS’s obligation to make reasonable efforts toward reunification.

The Judiciary supports the intention of the bill but has several drafting concerns. First, the definition of labor trafficking is not the same as the one found in Criminal Law, Sections 3-1201 through 3-1203, and the Judiciary believes this discrepancy could lead to confusion.

Second, the Judiciary noted a concern that the definition could be used more broadly than intended, and perhaps lead to unintended consequences. Relatedly, “force, fraud, or coercion” can be a more difficult concept when applied in the context of parents and guardians.

cc. Hon. Elizabeth Embry
Judicial Council
Legislative Committee
Kelley O’Connor