

I am very honored to provide this statement on behalf of the Family Impact Statement proposed bill before your committee. My name is Dr. David Ayers and I was main author of a report recommending a bill of this intent and mission based on Maryland county-level data exploring the connections between marriage and key social outcomes.

This proposed bill does nothing to denigrate or disadvantage family types other than those headed by married couples and particularly two biological parent families. For example, single parents often do heroic work juggling demands of work and child-rearing with typically more limited financial resources, and I applaud them heartily. What this bill actually does is recognize the enormous advantages for individuals and communities in the former and latter, and seeks to discourage legislation that would harm such and which might, ideally, promote the same.

Financial Impact Statements attached to proposed legislation, such as I believe Maryland has, are common. This current proposed legislation partners with these wise attempts at fiscal responsibility. Why? Because the financial advantages of married couple households, directly and indirectly, are enormous. This means more tax revenue, less poverty, more consumer spending, healthier retirement accounts, lower expenses associated with vast swaths of what we call our “social safety” nets, lower expenses tied to crime and crime victimization, and a lot more.

To name just one indirect area of financial benefit, not to mention outcomes critically important to human welfare, consider lower crime. Among Maryland counties, juvenile and adult crime, including violent crime, property crime, weapons issues, etc. were much lower where the proportion of married couple households was higher.

There’s more. Less sadness and hopelessness, less suicide attempts or plans, among youth. Less early and promiscuous sexual intercourse among youth. Less hard drug use among youth. Higher educational proficiency, attendance, and four-year graduation rates among school students. All of these things are associated with positive financial benefits, not to mention quality-of-life!

So, to me this bill is not partisan, does not denigrate alternative family forms and those involved in them. It simply seeks to ensure that legislation does not inadvertently create challenges or harm to marriage, or to married couple households and (where present) their children. Right now, married couples pay dividends to support and repair deficits associated with single parent households particularly. This is a politically inconvenient fact but one which is undeniable. Is it too much to ask that we avoid legislation that might harm them, and ideally, do what we can to support them? I think not.

Thank you for considering this written testimony.

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