



## House of Ruth Maryland

### Domestic Violence Legal Clinic

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Bill No.: Senate Bill 660  
Bill Title: Family Law – Child Support Guidelines – Agreement Between Parents  
Committee: Judicial Proceedings  
Hearing Date: February 13, 2025  
Position: **UNF**

House of Ruth is a non-profit organization providing shelter, counseling, and legal services to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. House of Ruth has offices in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Prince George's County, and Montgomery County. Senate Bill 660 would create a presumption that application of the child support guidelines would be unjust or inappropriate if there is an agreement between the parents to waive child support. **We urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to report unfavorably on Senate Bill 660.**

Under current law, application of the child support guidelines is presumptively correct. The court may only deviate from application of the guidelines in certain circumstances related to one or both parent's financial circumstances. SB 660 would introduce a new, presumptive basis for deviating from the child support guidelines when the parents agree that deviating is in the child's best interest. In essence, this would enable parents to agree to waive child support altogether.

This bill overlooks the very dangerous reality that perpetrators of domestic violence regularly intimidate, coerce, and threaten victims into bargaining away their rights. Even after the parties have separated, abusers routinely use the legal process as a means to control and dominate their victims. House of Ruth has talked to many victims over the years who have agreed to forego important legal remedies, such as primary physical custody, alimony, and division of marital property, because their abusers had threatened them, because they believed that giving up these rights would decrease the risk of future violence, or because they wanted to put an end to a protracted and traumatizing litigation process. SB 660 would work to the detriment of victims of intimate partner violence and their children, to whom the benefits of child support rightfully belong.

**The House of Ruth urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 660.**