



House Bill 1440

CHAIR CLIPPINGER, VICE CHAIR BARTLETT, AND MEMBERS OF THE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE,

I am honored to testify in strong support of HB 1440, which will ensure Maryland's jury service system is more accessible and accommodating to nursing parents and caregivers of young children.

It is the mission of the Wicomico Commission for Women to advocate for policies that uplift women and families in our County and beyond. The civic duty of jury service has not accounted for the real-life responsibilities of parents - particularly breastfeeding mothers and primary caregivers of young children. The absence of adequate accommodations forces parents into impossible, and at times uncomfortable choices, to fulfill their obligation to the courts while prioritizing the essential care of their children.

HB 1440 makes two critical improvements. It mandates that newly built or renovated circuit courthouses provide private lactation rooms - ensuring that nursing parents have a safe and dignified space to care for their children. It also expands the allowable reasons for excusal from jury duty to include breastfeeding mothers and caregivers of young children under the age of four, aligning Maryland with the 22 states that have already taken similar action.

These are common-sense solutions that bring our state in line with best practices nationwide. More importantly, they send a clear message: Maryland values the contributions of parents and caregivers, and our justice system should not be a barrier to those fulfilling this essential role.

I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 1440. Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kind Regards,

Megan Outten

Chair, Wicomico Women's Commission