



**HB120 - Family Law - Child Support - Capacity of Minors to File Action**  
**January 30, 2025**  
**Position: FAVORABLE**

*Maryland Legal Aid (MLA) submits written and oral testimony on HB120*

MLA serves residents in each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions providing free legal services to the State's low-income and vulnerable residents in a range of civil legal matters. MLA is Maryland's largest civil non-profit law firm, representing vulnerable young people in Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) matters across the State. This proposed legislation is an important measure to provide support and financial stability to children. MLA urges the Committee's favorable report on HB120.

Children of minor parents need the basics—food, clothing, medical care, education, and housing—and those needs can be expensive. Therefore, a minor parent must be able to petition for child support because, like any parent, they are entitled to receive financial support to help care for their child.

Currently, minors who are unable to petition the court for child support on their own behalf, are dependent upon a parent or guardian to file for them. However, a minor in foster care with physical custody of their child may not have a parent or guardian to file for child support for them. The minor parent in foster care is responsible for the care of their child, financial and otherwise, and should be able to receive the support their child is entitled to. They cannot depend on their parent, who may have been abusive, neglectful, unsupportive, or otherwise uninvolved in their life.

By having the ability to file for child support, the minor parent can receive financial assistance from the other parent, which can help them provide for their child. Additionally, it can help establish that both parents are legally involved in supporting their child's upbringing. This can also give the minor parent more stability and the resources they need to continue their own education or work toward becoming self-sufficient while raising their child.

Child support can help relieve some of the financial burden that comes with being a parent at a young age. The children of minor parents should not go without child support.

Maryland Legal Aid urges the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 120 and urge its ultimate passage. If you have any questions, please contact: Erica I. LeMon, Advocacy Director for Children's Rights at [elemon@mdlab.org](mailto:elemon@mdlab.org) (410) 951-7648 or (410) 935-0937.