

Dear **Members of the Judiciary Committee,**

This testimony is being submitted with Showing Up for Racial Justice Baltimore, a group of individuals working to move white folks as part of a multi-racial movement for equity and racial justice in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Howard County. I am also writing in collaboration with Out for Justice. I am a resident of **District 46. I am a workforce development professional in the City of Baltimore and I am a board member in my local Canton community association. I am testifying in opposition to HB0218 Family Law - Child Support.**

This bill would allow the Department of Human Services (DHS) to penalize individuals for noncompliance with child support payments by garnishing the wages of 1099 workers and independent contractors; by garnishing personal injury awards and winnings from sports betting; and by mandating employer reporting to DHS for a maximum 65% wage garnishment. It also increases the likelihood that these individuals will face incarceration by expanding the contempt window from 3 to 7 years. These policies are counterproductive, punishing parents who choose not to pay child support and parents who cannot pay child support in ways that reduce the ability of both groups of parents to support their children in the future.

According to *The Baltimore Sun*, “many of Baltimore’s most challenged neighborhoods are saddled with massive child support debt. It is concentrated in 10 city ZIP codes, where about 15,000 parents collectively owe more than \$233 million”<sup>1</sup>. Entire communities are burdened with old debts that people are unlikely to be able to repay. In a vicious cycle that prioritizes punishing parents over helping children, people can be incarcerated for not paying child support; build up child support debt while incarcerated; and then struggle to find a job when they are released because they now have a criminal record.

One job open to the formerly incarcerated is to become independent contractors. This bill makes it more likely people will be incarcerated, by expanding the contempt window, and then makes it possible to garnish the wages of those who become independent contractors by up to 65%. Such significant garnishment of wages will leave many people unable to pay for their basic needs. This perpetuates the cycle of poverty, increasing the chance of recidivism and the chance that people will be unable to pay child support. This bill is therefore likely to do more harm than good by negatively impacting the ability of parents who cannot pay child support to make the economic gains necessary for that support to be possible.

It is for these reasons that I am encouraging you to vote **in opposition to HB0218 Family Law - Child Support.**

Thank you for your time, service, and consideration.

Sincerely,

**John Preston Ford**  
**529 S East Ave, Baltimore, MD 21224**

---

<sup>1</sup>Baltimore Sun article from 3/5/2020 hosted by the Pulitzer Center <https://pulitzercenter.org/stories/what-cost-baltimores-poorest-families-child-support-system-exacts-heavy-price-and-its>