



February 11, 2024

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of 11:11 Media Impact, I write to express our strong support for **HB 497 – The Preventing Abduction in Youth Transport Act of 2025**. This critical legislation establishes long-overdue regulations for youth transportation companies that transport children to residential child care programs in Maryland and across the country.

11:11 Media Impact is dedicated to protecting children from the harm and trauma that too many have endured at the hands of unregulated youth transporters—including our CEO, Paris Hilton. Paris’s personal experience, along with the testimonies of countless survivors, makes clear that stronger safeguards are urgently needed to prevent further harm.

HB 497 enacts essential protections, including prohibiting the use of blindfolds, hoods, and physical restraints during transport, except in cases of immediate and serious risk of harm, and mandates that any staff applying restraints must be adequately trained. Improper restraints have led to tragic fatalities, making this reform a matter of life and death. Additionally, HB 497 prohibits nighttime removals between 9 PM and 6 AM, preventing children from being woken up and forcibly taken from their homes in the dead of night—a practice that inflicts lasting psychological trauma. HB 497 also creates civil enforcement mechanisms, empowering the Maryland Attorney General and affected individuals to hold violators accountable through legal action, with penalties including injunctive relief, statutory damages, and restitution.

Each year, thousands of vulnerable youth are transported by private companies to residential facilities—often without adequate oversight or regulation. HB 497 is a necessary step toward ensuring that no Maryland youth is subjected to abuse or unnecessary trauma under the guise of “treatment.” By implementing these commonsense protections, Maryland can lead the way in setting a national standard for youth safety.

We urge you to pass HB 497 and stand up for the well-being of Maryland’s children. Thank you for your leadership and commitment to protecting youth from harm.

Sincerely,

Rebecca Mellinger Grone
Head of Impact, 11:11 Media Impact