



**TESTIMONY FOR HB 1440**  
**Courts – Parental Accommodations**  
**Position: Favorable**

Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett, and members of the Judiciary Committee, We are proud to submit this testimony in strong support of HB 1440. Shore Progress (formerly the Lower Shore Progressive Caucus) is a nonpartisan civic organization covering the Eastern Shore of Maryland that advocates for policies that support working families, promote gender equity, and ensure that Maryland remains a leader in advancing economic and social justice.

HB 1440 is a long-overdue measure that modernizes Maryland's jury service system to better accommodate breastfeeding mothers and caregivers of young children. Under current law, the responsibilities of parents, especially mothers are not adequately recognized as legitimate reasons for excusal from jury duty. Parents are forced to choose between fulfilling a civic duty and providing essential care for their children. This outdated policy places an undue burden on families, particularly mothers, who continue to bear the primary caregiving responsibilities in our society.

The reality is that jury duty, while a cornerstone of our justice system, was designed in an era that failed to account for the evolving role of women in public life. It assumes a level of flexibility that many caregivers simply do not have. A parent cannot be expected to sit through a lengthy trial while simultaneously ensuring that their infant receives adequate nourishment or that their toddler receives constant supervision. The current system does not just create inconvenience; it forces parents into impossible choices that can have financial and emotional consequences.

HB 1440 introduces two simple yet essential reforms. First, it requires new and renovated circuit courthouses to provide private lactation rooms, ensuring that nursing parents have a safe and sanitary space to pump or breastfeed. This is not just about comfort. It is about dignity, health, and equity. Second, it expands the allowable reasons for excusal from jury duty to include breastfeeding mothers and caregivers of young children under the age of four. This change recognizes the undeniable reality of parenting and removes an unnecessary barrier for families who are already stretched thin.

Other states have recognized this need and acted accordingly. Twenty-two states including California, Connecticut, Illinois, and Virginia already allow breastfeeding parents to be excused from jury service. States like California and Florida have passed laws requiring courthouses to provide lactation rooms for public use. These are not radical policies. They are common-sense reforms that acknowledge the realities of modern family life. It is time for Maryland to align itself with these best practices and create a judicial system that truly serves all of its citizens.

On behalf of Shore Progress, we urge a favorable report on HB 1440. Thank you for your time and consideration.