

# Written Testimony in Support of Maryland HB497

## House Judiciary Committee

100 Taylor House Office Building

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Annapolis, Maryland 21401

February 11th, 2025

Bill Number: HB497

Position: Favorable

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

My name is **Valerie Paulsgrove**, and I am a **Maryland resident** writing to express my strong support for HB 497 – The Preventing Abduction in Youth Transport Act. This bill will regulate youth transport companies to ensure children are not subjected to harmful and coercive practices when being transported to residential facilities.

Currently, youth transport companies operate with little to no oversight, leading to distressing and traumatizing experiences for vulnerable children. Many youth are taken in the middle of the night, forcibly removed from their homes, handcuffed, blindfolded, or physically restrained in ways that are more akin to abduction than a legitimate intervention. These practices can cause lasting psychological harm.

### HB 497 would:

- Prohibit transport companies from using **blindfolds, hoods, and unnecessary restraints**.
- Ban nighttime pickups **between 9 PM - 6 AM** to prevent distressing removals.
- Require that any use of restraints be **justified and applied only by trained staff** in extreme cases.
- Hold transport companies accountable through enforcement measures.

**I have seen and heard multiple accounts of victims who have suffered lifelong trauma from these practices. We need to stand up for victims, especially children and minors who have limited**

**legal ability to stand up for themselves. Please pass this bill to protect Maryland youth.**

HB 497 is a necessary step to ensure that children are transported in a way that prioritizes their safety, dignity, and well-being. Maryland has a responsibility to ensure that vulnerable youth are not subjected to state-sanctioned trauma. I urge the committee to pass this bill and take action against harmful transport practices.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

**Sincerely,  
Valerie Paulsgrove**

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