



TESTIMONY

HB1290 – Child in Need of Assistance Proceedings – Child’s Right to Be Present

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Woods

Committee: Judicial Proceedings

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Aileen Alex, CoChair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in support of **HB1290** on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are an association of unpaid citizen advocates—individuals and grassroots groups in every district across the state—representing and supporting more than 30,000 Marylanders.

Children in Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) cases often experience instability, trauma, and uncertainty. I believe that allowing kids to be present when decisions are made about their safety, placement, and well-being helps restore a sense of agency and ensures that their voices do not continue to be lost in a system that is supposed to protect them.

HB1290 takes an important step toward strengthening fairness and transparency in Maryland’s child welfare system by ensuring that children involved in proceedings have the right to be present. As the bill summary explains, HB1290 authorizes a child to attend their own proceeding. This ensures that children—whose lives and futures are directly affected—are not unnecessarily shut out of the process. When exclusion is necessary, HB1290 ensures that it is done thoughtfully, with the child’s best interests at the center.

HB1290 aligns with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. Our work centers on transparency, accountability, and social justice. Ensuring that children have the opportunity to be present in proceedings that profoundly affect their lives is consistent with those values and strengthens Maryland’s commitment to a fair and humane child welfare system.

For these reasons, we respectfully urge a **FAVORABLE** report on HB1290.