



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Stacy L. Rodgers, Acting Secretary

April 2, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East Miller, Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 1290 - CHILD IN NEED OF ASSISTANCE - PROCEEDINGS - CHILD'S RIGHT TO BE PRESENT - POSITION: FAVORABLE

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 1290 (HB 1290). HB 1290 was reported favorably with amendments that DHS supports and passed 133-0.

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS provides preventive and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to help Marylanders reach their full potential. Our Social Services Administration (SSA) implements child welfare programs throughout the state which are affected by HB 1290. HB 1290 authorizes a child who is the subject of a child in need of assistance (CINA) court proceeding to be present at the proceeding. Most importantly, it does not compel the child to attend but ensures that they are afforded the ability to do so if they desire.

HB 1290 would codify existing practices of the Maryland Judiciary expressed in [MD Judicial Rule 11-109](#). There are scenarios where it may not be in the best interest of the child to be present during a CINA proceeding, as it could be traumatic. Both MD Judicial Rule 11-109 and HB 1290 have protections to ensure a child is not *required* to be present should they choose not to, or if their presence would not be in their best interest.

HB 1290 aligns with the goals and policies of SSA and our Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS). SSA provides each LDSS with a document entitled the Youth Matters

Handbook, which is distributed to children when they enter Out of Home (OOH) care to help them understand the child welfare system, the court process, and resources available to them. The Youth Matters Handbook describes the CINA process and the child's "right to attend court hearings, speak with the Judge and/or Magistrate and receive a copy of the court documents for your records." The handbook also assists with identifying individuals the youth can contact for support during their experience of out-of-home care. In addition, the Maryland Out-of-Home Care Youth Bill of Rights identifies all the rights and responsibilities a child has, including the right to "to attend court hearings, speak with the Judge and/or Magistrate, and receive a copy of the court documents for your records." For these reasons DHS supports HB 1290 to codify current practice and policy, and ensure that youth are able to be present during their own CINA proceedings, should they so desire.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer favorable testimony to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at justin.hayes1@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gloria Brown Burnett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Gloria Brown Burnett
Deputy Secretary for Operations