



April 3, 2026

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

House Bill 1258 — Child Placement Services – Advertising by Unlicensed Person – Prohibition

Position: SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Pam Hoehler, and I am writing to express strong support for House Bill 1258. I am the Director of Adoption and Permanency Services at Paths for Families. Our agency, formerly Adoptions Together, has been licensed in Maryland since 1990, providing services to women, children, and families within the adoption community. We have remained committed to providing ethical care to all Marylanders, regardless of race, religion, gender expression, or marital status for over 35 years.

House Bill 1258 addresses an important child welfare and consumer protection concern by prohibiting individuals or entities from advertising adoption or child placement services in Maryland unless they are a licensed child placement agency or a local department of social services. Maryland provides sound protections for all individuals receiving adoption services, including prospective adoptive parents, expectant and birth parents, and adopted children. For example, Maryland law allows for a reasonable period of time in which birth parents can change their minds about the adoption plan – 30 days – which is uncommon in over 2/3 states who only allow 4 days or less to revoke consent of adoption. State law also restricts payment of living expenses to expectant or birth parents to situations in which a doctor verifies that the individual cannot work and requires support for a healthy pregnancy and recovery. This helps protect prospective adoptive families from financial exploitation by individuals who are not intending to pursue adoption. Maryland further allows legally enforceable Post Adoption Contact Agreements, supporting open adoption practices that promote emotional well-being and positive identity development for adopted children. Unlicensed facilitators undermine these protections by drawing families toward unregulated services that advertise “quick” or “financially beneficial” placements. These practices fall short of ethical standards and place expectant

Adoptions Together, Inc. D/B/A Paths for Families

Offices located in MD, VA, and DC.

Corporate HQ: 6411 Ivy Lane, Suite 700, Greenbelt, MD 20770

P: 301-439-2900 • F: 301-937-2147 • www.pathsforfamilies.org

parents, adoptive families, and children at risk.

Unlicensed individuals or entities advertising adoption services create significant risks for Maryland families. Their involvement often draws vulnerable expectant parents and prospective adoptive families into unregulated environments with no oversight, no training standards, and no ethical accountability—protections that are required of licensed child placement agencies. Through online advertising, these unlicensed facilitators frequently present themselves as credible providers, offering “quick matches” and using polished websites with vague or misleading descriptions of Maryland law. Families are routinely charged more than \$20,000 for “matching services,” only to learn that the services provided are minimal and the matches themselves are often unvetted and inappropriate. In many cases, these families believe they have paid the full cost of an adoption, when they have in fact paid only for initial contact with individuals who may not even be planning to pursue adoption.

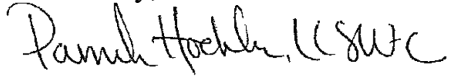
One Maryland family was contacted directly by a woman who was 10 weeks pregnant and merely exploring her options. The facilitator had provided the family’s personal phone number without offering the expectant parent any counseling, legal information, or screening. As a result, the family—trying to be helpful—found themselves providing guidance and even financial support for housing and basic needs. They were unaware that providing such financial assistance is unlawful in Maryland without medical documentation. Not only did this situation cause the family substantial financial loss, but it also placed them at risk of engaging in actions that could have invalidated any future adoption. Had the expectant parent been referred to a licensed Maryland agency at the outset, she would have received proper options counseling, legal guidance, and access to resources aligned with state law. The inappropriate and premature match would never have occurred, sparing both parties unnecessary emotional and financial hardship.

This legislation also aligns Maryland with approaches used in other states that restrict adoption advertising to licensed or authorized entities to ensure accountability and transparency. Preventing deceptive or unregulated marketing practices helps ensure that adoption placements occur within systems designed to safeguard children’s well-being and family stability.

House Bill 1258 establishes a clear and essential standard: only licensed entities may advertise child placement or adoption services in Maryland. This targeted reform protects children, supports families, and preserves the integrity of Maryland’s child welfare system by ensuring that all adoption-related advertising is conducted within regulated, accountable, and ethical frameworks. This law does not prohibit any legal adoption practices conducted in Maryland by licensed, regulated providers.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a **favorable report on House Bill 1258**. Thank you for your consideration.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Pam Hoehler, LCSW-C". The signature is written in a cursive style.

Pam Hoehler, LCSW-C

Director of Adoption and Permanency Services

Adoptions Together, a program of Paths for Families

Greenbelt office: 6411 Ivy Lane, Suite 700, Greenbelt, Maryland 20770,

22nd Legislative District

Catonsville office: 22 Bloomsbury Avenue, Suite 300, Catonsville, MD 21228,

44B Legislative District