

Adonis Adkins Jr - FAV - SB 16.pdf

Uploaded by: Adonis Adkins, Jr

Position: FAV

Dear Senator Smith and the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Adonis Adkins Jr, a resident of District 45. I am asking you to support SB 16.

Capping child support garnishment at 25% for individuals earning less than approximately \$40,000 per year is absolutely critical. Between rent, gas, food, and taxes, people earning under \$40,000 are already left with little to nothing and that's before child support is even factored in.

The current system forces these non-custodial parents into an impossible choice: either don't pay child support and face the consequences, or pay child support and end up on the brink of homelessness. This is not a real choice.

Let me be clear: paying child support is a necessity. Non-custodial parents absolutely should be held accountable for supporting their children. But they cannot be pushed to the point of homelessness, because if they are, they won't be able to pay child support at all. We'll be left with the same problem we're trying to fix: non-custodial parents not paying child support.

This bill doesn't let anyone off the hook—it creates a system where people can actually be accountable over the long term instead of being crushed in the short term.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 16. This is about creating a child support system that actually works for children by ensuring their parents can survive while they pay.

Thank you.

SB0016_HB0142_FAV_AprilleHamilton (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Aprille Hamilton

Position: FAV



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 16/HOUSE BILL 142:

Child Support – Earnings Withholdings Limits

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings and House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Aprille Hamilton

Members of the committee, my name is Aprille Hamilton. I am a member of Out For Justice, living in State District 8, and I support Senate Bill 16/House Bill 142, which limits the amount of wages that can be withheld for child support for low-income parents, so we can meet our basic needs while continuing to support our children. I am in a very unique position in that I am both paying child support for one of my children while receiving child support for another.

I have a 13-year-old daughter from a previous relationship and a three-year-old that I am raising alone. I left my last relationship after surviving multiple domestic violence situations with my ex, the father of my oldest daughter. It was not easy. After I left, I struggled to secure housing, ending up in a shelter and eventually losing custody of my oldest child. Subsequently, I was placed on child support, my wages were garnished, and my driver's license was suspended. My quality of life plummeted significantly, and I had to reach back out to him, my abuser, and plead with him to drop the order, which he eventually did. I am blessed that the situation worked the way that it did, but no one should have to plead with their abuser to repeal a child support case.

Years later, I moved to Alaska to work as a waitress on a cruise ship. During this time, another child support order was issued for my daughter. Because I was not in the state, I never received notice and had no opportunity to respond or explain my circumstances. I now owe thousands in arrears and have endured repeated license suspensions and the 65% wage garnishment, which, after expenses, effectively leaves my income at \$0 annually. Thankfully, I have a significant other whom I can rely on to meet my basic necessities, but this is unsustainable.

This cycle of garnishment and suspension made it harder to keep a job, get to work, and move forward. I want to work and support my children, but when most of your paycheck is taken out before you ever see it, it feels like you are being set up to fail. With inflation not keeping pace with wages, I don't think a 65% garnishment is realistic for those on the lower end of the income spectrum. I was excited to hear that this would be addressed this year in Maryland, especially now that I can maintain my driver's license thanks to the bill you all passed last year.

If Senate Bill 16 is passed into law, I will be able to work toward stability instead of constantly trying to catch up. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report.

Sydnor Testimony for Senate Bill 16.pdf

Uploaded by: Charles Sydnor III

Position: FAV



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony for Senate Bill 16
Child Support – Earnings Withholdings Limits
Before the Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 29, 2026**

Good afternoon, Chair Smith and my colleagues on the Judicial Proceedings Committee.

Senate Bill 16 seeks to cap wage garnishments to 25% for child support obligors earning less than \$40,000 per year. The goal of this bill is to improve lower-income obligors' ability to pay their support orders and to incentivize them to remain in the workforce. This provision was the highlight of the Department of Human Services' Omnibus Child Support Reform Bill from last session, and this year, we are making it a standalone issue.¹

The 1968 Federal Consumer Credit Protection Act ("CCPA") caps wage garnishment at 25% of disposable income for most debts, but allows up to 65% garnishment for child support and alimony obligations.² The purpose of this carve-out was to ensure a legal and moral duty to provide for dependents and prevent shifting the burden of support from the individual to the government. However, that's not what we're seeing happen in the real world.

After taxes and a 65% garnishment, an employee making Maryland's minimum wage of \$15/hour, for example, is left with approximately \$4.25/hour, or less than \$9,000 per year if working full-time, to cover housing, food, and clothing. An Abell Foundation report by the former commissioner for the federal Office of Child Support Services found that "[the 50% to 65%] withholding rate can have the unintended effect of pushing low-wage parents out of a job, because the remaining paycheck is often too little to survive on."³ According a 2022 review conducted by the University of Maryland School of Social Work, 65% of child support obligors in Maryland earn less than \$32,000 annually.⁴

¹ See DHS's written testimony from 2025 here:

https://mgaleg.maryland.gov/cmte_testimony/2025/jpr/24316_01132025_13410-329.pdf

² 15 U.S.C. § 1673(b)(2)(B).

³ Vicki Turetsky, *Reforming Child Support to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families*, Abell Rep., Jun. 2019, at 24.

⁴ Natalie Demyan & Letitia Logan Passarella, *Maryland Child Support Guidelines: 2015-2018 Case-Level Review* 17 (2022).

Research shows that child support is more likely to be paid if it consists of roughly one-fifth of an obligor's income,⁵ and collection rates decline when support orders comprise more than 30% of obligors' incomes.⁶ When obligors leave the workforce due to unsustainable garnishments, the entire family loses access to critical financial support, and the state's tax base is reduced.

Senate Bill 16 seeks to address this by following the Abell Foundation's recommendation, capping wage garnishments at 25% for parents with annual incomes below 250% of the Federal Poverty Level.⁷ For a household of one in 2026, this threshold would be about \$40,000.⁸ This is in parity with other garnishment rates in Maryland and incentivizes obligors to own the responsibility of caring for their dependents while retaining enough income to survive on.

As such, I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 16.

⁵ Steven Eldred & Mark Takayesu, *How Do Child Support Order Amounts Affect Payments and Compliance?* 41 (2011).

⁶ Leslie Hodges, Daniel R. Meyer, & Maria Cancian, *What Happens When The Amount Of Child Support Due Is A Burden?*, 94 *Social Service Review* (2020).

⁷ Turetsky, *Reforming Child Support*, *supra*, at 38.

⁸ <https://aspe.hhs.gov/topics/poverty-economic-mobility/poverty-guidelines#:~:text=1,%2415%2C650>

Chris Seymore - FAV - SB 16.pdf

Uploaded by: Chris Seymore

Position: FAV

Good afternoon Senators, my name is Chris Seymore, I am a resident of District 43A and I am here to ask you to support Senate Bill 16.

I want to be clear about something that matters deeply to me: I want to support my children. That has never been in question. I love them, I care about their future, and I believe providing for them is part of my purpose as a father. At the same time, I am struggling under a system that has become overwhelming to the point where it is affecting my ability to live, function, and move forward in a healthy way. Right now, the financial burden of wage garnishments leaves me constantly behind, anxious, and feeling trapped. I am working, I am trying, but the pressure is so heavy that it feels like no matter how hard I push, I cannot catch my breath. I am not asking to walk away from my responsibilities—I am asking for a realistic path that allows me to support my children without being crushed in the process.

5 years ago I was badly injured in a workplace accident and overprescribed pain killers. Years of struggling with the consequences of addiction has led me to be more than 50k in child support arrears. After my second successful attempt at rehab and completing a workforce development program, I am finally working in a conventional 9 to 5 job. I earn \$19.50 an hour as a bank teller. A 65% garnishment rate would mean I'm left with \$5.45 an hour (about \$750 per month) to pay rent, buy groceries, and pay for transportation to and from work.

Lucky for me, I am able to live with my mom right now so I can barely scrape by. If she ever changes her mind, I'm afraid I'll be forced to decide between keeping my job that's allowing me to pay child support regularly for the first time in years, or working under the table and paying when I can. Supporting my children should not mean losing myself entirely. I am asking for understanding, fairness, and the opportunity to move forward in a way that benefits everyone involved—especially my kids. Please vote yes on SB 16.

Thank you.

Fact Sheet_ Wage Garnishment Caps (SB0016_HB0142).

Uploaded by: Christopher Dews

Position: FAV



Senate Bill 16: Child Support - Earnings Withholding Limits *Cap Child Support Wage Garnishments at 25% for Low-Income Parents*

THE CHALLENGE

- Under [federal law](#), the Child Support Administration has the right to **garnish 50% - 65%** of an obligor's (parent paying child support) income to enforce a child support order.
- After taxes and a 65% garnishment, an employee making \$15/hour is **left with approximately \$4.25/hour, or \$8,000 per year, to cover housing, food, and clothing.**
- An [Abell Foundation report](#) by the former Federal Child Support Director found that "[the 50% to 65%] withholding rate can have **the unintended effect of pushing low-wage parents out of a job**, because the remaining paycheck is often too little to survive on." (pg.24)
- According to the most [recent quadrennial review](#) conducted by the University of Maryland School of Social Work (pg. 17):
 - **65% of child support obligors earn less than [Maryland's Living Wage \(\\$54,500\)](#)**
 - **50% of child support obligors make less than [200% of the Federal Level \(\\$31,000\)](#)**
 - *Note: The report utilizes the 2018 Maryland Living Wage (MLW) of \$2,614 per month for one adult. In 2025, the MLW for one adult is [\\$26.17 per hour](#), which is \$4,188 per month and \$54,500 per year, assuming a 40-hour workweek.*
- Research shows that **child support is more likely to be paid if it consists of [roughly one-fifth of an obligor's income](#)** (Eldred & Takayesu, 2011), and **[collection rates decline when support orders comprise more than 30% of obligors' incomes](#)** (Hodges, 2020).
- When obligors leave the workforce due to excessive garnishments, **the entire family loses** access to critical financial support, and the state's tax base is reduced.

CURRENT LAW

- The [1968 Federal Consumer Protection Act \(CCPA\)](#) caps wage garnishment at 25% of disposable income for most debts, such as credit card and medical debts, but allows up to 65% garnishment for child support and alimony obligations.
- [Maryland Ann. Code Family Law §12-101](#) defines an obligor's income as income from any source, including salaries, wages, commissions, bonuses, expense reimbursements, social security, workers' compensation, unemployment insurance, disability insurance, dividends, interest, trusts, annuities, and alimony - all of which are subject to garnishment. However, [Income from public assistance is exempt](#) (e.g., TANF, SNAP, SSI).

SOLUTION: CAP WAGE GARNISHMENTS AT 25% FOR LOW-INCOME PARENTS

- As stated in the Abell Report, Maryland should cap wage garnishments at 25% for parents with annual incomes below \$40,000, or 250% of the [Federal Poverty Level](#). (pg. 38)
- Lowering the maximum garnishment rate **results in higher child support collections.**
- When obligors aren't forced to choose between basic survival and paying child support, they **remain employed** in the formal workforce and **make more consistent payments over time, resulting in measurable improvements in child development outcomes, more cooperative co-parenting relationships, and enhanced financial stability** for both households.

For more information, contact:

Christopher Dews / Christopher@dewsassociates.com / 301-412-5399

2025_DHS_Supports_WageGarnishmentCaps.pdf

Uploaded by: D'wan Burton

Position: FAV



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

February 20, 2025

The Hon. Luke Clippinger, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 100
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 218 - FAMILY LAW - CHILD SUPPORT - POSITION:
FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS**

Dear Chair Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully requests a favorable report with our amendments for HB 218.

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS empowers Marylanders to reach their full potential by providing preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities. HB 218 would modernize the Child Support Administration (CSA) to better serve Marylanders by making changes in three key areas: equitable child support orders, the driver's license suspension (DLS) program, and amendments to improve collection of past-due child support.

Child support has evolved nationally in its purpose, function, and use since it was first authorized in 1975 as part of the Social Security Act. It is time for Maryland law to evolve and modernize into the 21st century. HB 218 would better align Maryland's child support program with the function of child support today: supporting families by ensuring children receive the support they deserve from both of their parents. To ensure children receive the support of both parents, the bill expands collection options and streamlines enforcement tools when a parent is unwilling to pay, without punishing parents who want to pay but cannot afford to do so. Our work is meant to support parents and their families, not punish them when they're trying to make ends meet.

Summary

HB 218 would ensure the child support program operates equitably for Marylanders by excluding obligors with lower incomes from the state DLS program and capping the maximum amount of a child support payment at 25% of a parent's income. HB 218 would end Maryland's practice of recouping state costs for foster care maintenance from child support paid to custodial parents. HB 218 would also extend the statute of limitations for contempt filings to allow more time to work with non-custodial parents on meeting their obligations. The additional reforms proposed in HB 218 focus on parents who are able but unwilling to pay by authorizing collection from new forms of income, and expanding "new hire" reporting so CSA is aware of non-custodial parents working in the "gig economy" as independent contractors.

Equity

HB 218 would provide new opportunities to ensure child support orders are more equitable for Marylanders. HB 218 would:

1. Cap the maximum amount of garnishment at 25% of the non-custodial parent's income when equal to or less than the 250% of the federal poverty level, regardless of whether income is earned through W-2 wages, as a 1099-independent contractor, or from other sources. This language was crafted in collaboration with our partners in the advocacy community, including the Center for Urban Families.
2. Establish a multi-family adjustment to the child support amount to ensure all children that a parent is financially responsible to support are accounted for when determining the amount of a child support order.

When child support orders are equitable parents can avoid arrearages and enforcement actions while improving payment consistency and reliability. If arrears accrue, HB 218 would provide additional time to remove barriers to payment.

Critically, HB 218 would eliminate the diversion of child support payments to reimburse state costs of foster care when the child must experience out-of-home care. The amount of child support collected while a child is in out-of-home care is typically less than the administrative cost to perform the capture. In Washington state, a cost-effectiveness [study](#) for federal fiscal year 2018 found that for every dollar spent pursuing the child support money, the Department of Children, Youth, and Families collected only 39 cents. In addition, other [studies](#) demonstrate the financial burden on families of reimbursing foster care makes it more difficult for children experiencing out-of-home care to reunite with their parents. Eliminating the requirement to transfer child support payments to foster care reaffirms our commitment to serving the best interests of the child by promoting safe, timely, and stable family reunification - because family matters.

Improving Support and Arrears Collections

The other side of improving equity in child support is ensuring that all of an obligor's potential income sources are identified. When we have the full picture of an obligor's income it is more likely that minor children will receive the support they are owed. As evidenced by the Joint Chairmen's Report request for a monthly [Report on Child Support Services Performance](#), improvements in "Current Support Collections" and "Cases Paying Arrears" are a priority for us. Identifying additional income sources would increase child support collected for families, and thereby improve our performance on indicators that determine the amount of federal incentive funding Maryland receives.

Maryland currently collects past-due child support from lottery and casino winnings. HB 218 would add the authority to collect past-due child support from sports wagering winnings. Since January 1, 2019, CSA collected more than \$2,400,000 in child support arrears from casino and lottery winnings.

HB 218 would authorize liens for past-due child support against the net amount of a monetary award in a civil judgment. When a non-custodial parent who owes child support arrears receives a payout from a lawsuit, we would capture the lower of either an amount that satisfies the child support arrears or constitutes 25% of the net recovery from the award. Non-custodial parents would be able to settle legal fees, medical bills, and any other expenses related to the litigation before past-due child support is collected. Maryland would join 29 other states, including all of our [federal Region III child support partner states](#), in using the Insurance Services Office (ISO) Claim Search. The ISO is a comprehensive database in which participating insurers and other organizations report individual insurance claims that can be used for paying overdue child support.

Finally, HB 218 would require the Maryland Department of Labor (DOL) to include independent contractors among the standard new hires data that is already reported to CSA. [Maryland Labor and Employment Code § 8-626.1](#) requires employers to report all new employees - including 1099 independent contractors - to DOL's State Directory of New Hires. HB 218 would require the DOL to also provide 1099 hire information to us. CSA will use the data to match newly-hired 1099 independent contractors against state and national child support records. The new hire data enables us to locate parents and establish a child support order or enforce an existing order. Including independent contractors in new hire reporting to CSA reduces the burden on parents working as independent contractors by automatically updating their employment information. When employment information is current, our administrative efficiency improves by eliminating delays caused by self-reporting. Requiring DOL to report newly-hired independent contractors to CSA will drive an increase in child support collections for Maryland families, and could help children in other states with parental

ties to Maryland. Any increase in collections for families will also help improve the state's performance on key indicators used to determine federal child support incentive funds.

Driver's License Suspension Program

Currently parents are notified that they may be referred to the DLS program after child support payments are 60 days past due. Additional enforcement actions can be implemented at 120 days past due. Amendments 6 and 7 expand the timeline for obligors from 60 days of arrears to 120 days and would align all enforcement actions on the same timeline.

Under HB 218, non-custodial parents whose income is under 250% of the Federal Poverty Line would be excluded from the DLS program for one calendar year. DHS Amendment #8 directs the courts to "send a copy of the guideline calculation worksheet and the order to the child support administration." Requiring the court to send relevant information would ensure we have the income information needed to exclude the parent from the DLS program. After one year of exclusion from the DLS program, non-custodial parents would be required to provide updated income information to CSA to maintain their continued exclusion from the DLS program. When we do not have sufficient income information to exclude someone from the DLS program, we will request income verification from the parent. CSA is also working to link income data we may have when an obligor participates in a means-tested program administered by DHS. Linking income data would enable us to administratively exclude some low-income parents who are in arrears from the DLS program. HB 218 would enable us to distinguish between parents who are able but unwilling to pay child support from parents who are unable to pay child support. We believe HB 218 would increase the effectiveness of the DLS program by focusing on parents who have the means to pay their child support obligations but choose not to do so.

HB 218 differs from [HB 681](#) / [SB 15](#), in the approach taken to address the issue of driver's licenses suspensions. We absolutely agree with the sponsors of [HB 681](#) / [SB 15](#) that when a parent experiencing poverty must choose between getting to work and potential arrest for driving on a suspended license, the best interests of Maryland's children are not being served. However, the DLS program created by [HB 681](#) / [SB 15](#) would leave operational gaps limiting our ability to achieve shared policy objectives, despite the best of intentions. While HB 218 would ensure we are able to confirm the parent's current income with them, [HB 681](#) / [SB 15](#) would remove this critical opportunity for communication. We encourage parents to communicate with us so we can identify when a parent may need additional employment services or state benefits. Finally, the DLS program approach in HB 218 would ensure we remain compliant with federal laws requiring states to maintain an effective DLS program.

Conversely, [HB 681](#) / [SB 15](#) could reduce Maryland's performance on federal efficacy indicators like "Support Collections," "Cases Paying Arrears," and overall "Cost Effectiveness" that the federal government uses to prioritize the annual incentive payments it makes to all 50 states.

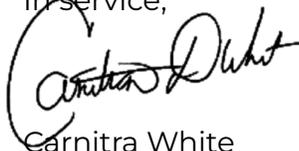
Expand Statute of Limitations for Contempt

Under current law, if a contempt action needs to be filed, it must be filed within three years of the past due date for child support arrearage or within three years after the child emancipates. HB 218 would increase the statute of limitations for filing a motion for contempt to allow the Administration additional time to work with the obligated parent and collect child support. In most instances, contempt is used as a last resort to encourage compliance. Extending the timeline provides additional time for CSA to pursue less punitive actions to encourage compliance by the non-custodial parent. CSA always prefers to take administrative action first. Extending the statute of limitations for contempt filings would benefit non-custodial parents by giving them additional time to seek non-enforcement options, such as job training and financial education. When obligors have time to improve their ability to provide support, their children are the ones who benefit. By extending the statute of limitations, HB 218 would encourage both parents by providing additional time to work within the system toward the best interests of the child.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide favorable testimony with amendments to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. You will find our proposed amendment on the following page. We look forward to your partnership in helping us make sure to leave no one behind through your support of House Bill 218.

If you require additional information, please contact Rachel Sledge, Director of Government Affairs, at rachel.sledge@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Carnitra White", written over a large, faint circular stamp or watermark.

Carnitra White
Principal Deputy Secretary

Proposed Sponsor Amendments

Amendment No. 1

On page 4, line 9, after “;”, strike “AND”

On page 4, line 11, strike “.” add “; **AND**” a new subsection (F)(3):

(3) HAS AN INDIVIDUAL INCOME FOR THE CURRENT YEAR NOT GREATER THAN 250% OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES, THE MAXIMUM GARNISHMENT FOR THE COMBINED SUPPORT ORDER AND ARREARAGE SHALL BE 25 PERCENT OF THE OBLIGOR'S DISPOSABLE EARNINGS, UNLESS THE OBLIGOR WAS DETERMINED AT THE TIME OF THE MOST RECENT COURT ORDER TO BE VOLUNTARILY IMPOVERISHED.

Amendment No. 2

On page 5, line 13, add a new **(2)** “**WHEN AN OBLIGOR IS FOUND TO BE THE EQUIVALENT OF 30 DAYS OUT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THEIR CHILD SUPPORT ORDER, THE ADMINISTRATION SHALL SEND A WRITTEN NOTICE OF ARREARAGE TO THE OBLIGOR.**”

Renumber the current subsection (2) as subsection **(3)**.

Amendment No. 3

On page 9, lines 6-7, strike “WITH A NONCOMMERCIAL LICENSE”

On page 9, line 7, strike “60,” and replace with “**120**”

On page 9, lines 7-8, “**OR AN OBLIGOR WITH A COMMERCIAL LICENSE WHO IS 120 DAYS OR MORE OUT OF COMPLIANCE,**”

On page 9, line 28, strike “2024”, and replace with “**CURRENT**”.

On page 9, lines 28-29, strike “(\$37,650 per year)”

Amendment No. 4

On page 12, line 24, strike “REFERS TO THE MAXIMUM AMOUNT” and replace with “**IS EQUAL TO 25 PERCENT**”

Amendment No. 5

On page 18, on line 1, insert:

(3) FOR OBLIGORS WHOSE INDIVIDUAL INCOME FOR THE CURRENT YEAR IS NOT GREATER THAN 250% OF THE FEDERAL POVERTY GUIDELINES, THE MAXIMUM GARNISHMENT FOR THE COMBINED SUPPORT ORDER AND ARREARAGE SHALL BE 25 PERCENT OF THE OBLIGOR'S DISPOSABLE EARNINGS, UNLESS THE OBLIGOR WAS DETERMINED AT THE TIME OF THE MOST RECENT COURT ORDER TO BE VOLUNTARILY IMPOVERISHED.

On page 18, strike lines 10-15 in its entirety.

Amendment No. 6

On page 21, line 27, strike "2019", and replace with "**CURRENT**".

On page 21, line 28, strike "\$1,145"

On page 22, line 22, strike "2019", and replace with "**CURRENT**".

On page 22, line 23, strike "(LESS THAN \$1,145)"

Amendment No. 7

On page 23, line 9, create a new subsection (**B**) and renumber the remainder of the section:

(B) AFTER ESTABLISHING OR MODIFYING A CHILD SUPPORT ORDER, THE COURT SHALL SEND A COPY OF THE GUIDELINE CALCULATION WORKSHEET AND THE ORDER TO THE CHILD SUPPORT ADMINISTRATION, IF THE ADMINISTRATION IS PROVIDING CHILD SUPPORT SERVICES IN ACCORDANCE WITH PART D, SUBCHAPTER IV OF THE SOCIAL SECURITY ACT.

On page 23, lines 33-34, strike "**WITH A NONCOMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE**"

Amendment No. 8

On page 24, line 5, strike "60" and replace with "**120**"

On page 24, lines 1-3, strike ", **OR AN OBLIGOR WITH A COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE IS 120 DAYS OR MORE OUT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE MOST RECENT CHILD SUPPORT ORDER**"

On page 24, lines 26-28, strike "**60 DAYS OUT OF COMPLIANCE WITH THE MOST RECENT CHILD SUPPORT ORDER IF THE INDIVIDUAL HAS A NONCOMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE, OR**"

On page 24, lines 29-30, strike "**IF THE INDIVIDUAL HAS A COMMERCIAL DRIVER'S LICENSE**"

SB0016_HB0142_FAV_OFJ (1).pdf

Uploaded by: D'wan Burton

Position: FAV



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 16

Child Support – Earnings Withholdings Limits

TO: Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

FROM: Dwan Burton, Deputy Director, Out For Justice Inc.

My name is Dwan Burton, and I am submitting this written testimony on behalf of Out for Justice, Inc. (OFJ), a grassroots organization whose mission is to engage, educate, and empower individuals impacted by the legal system. **We actively hire staff and members on child support who have direct experience with 50-65% of their wages being garnished.** As such, we strongly support Senate Bill 16, which caps wage garnishments to 25% of disposable income for lower-income parents.

As an employer committed to hiring from impacted communities, OFJ has seen firsthand how excessive wage garnishments affect employee morale and job retention. When more than half of a worker's wages are taken, meeting basic needs becomes nearly impossible. Our members question why they should remain employed full-time when their wages cannot cover rent, food, transportation, or childcare. This leads to disengagement, absenteeism, and, in many cases, quitting work altogether.

We invest significant time and resources in recruiting, training, and supporting our staff - particularly those rebuilding their lives after incarceration or long-term economic hardship - only to have them leave after the first or second paycheck due to the wage withholding. Thus, we have to repeatedly recruit, onboard, and train new hires while managing staffing gaps and reduced productivity. Reducing the garnishment cap to 25% for lower-income workers and returning citizens, who make up the majority of our member base, would be a boon to our business.

To be clear, **Senate Bill 16 is not about avoiding responsibility.** It is about ensuring Maryland's wage garnishment policies actively support workforce stability and protect children. For these reasons, Out for Justice respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 16.

2026 Testimony SB 16 - Daniel Hatcher.pdf

Uploaded by: Dan Hatcher

Position: FAV

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB 16:**Child Support - Earnings Withholding Limits**

TO: Hon. William C. Smith, Jr., Chair, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Daniel L. Hatcher, Professor of Law, University of Baltimore School of Law

DATE: January 29, 2026

RE: SB 16 – Support

Dear Chairman Smith and members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony in support of SB 16. I have been a law professor at the University of Baltimore since 2004, including teaching the Civil Advocacy Clinic where students represent low-income clients. My research has received national attention, focusing on improving programs and policies for vulnerable children and impoverished adults—including extensive research regarding the impact of child support policies. Prior to UB, I was an assistant director of advocacy and also staff attorney at the Legal Aid Bureau, representing adults in all areas of poverty law (including representing both custodial and noncustodial parents in child support matters) and representing children in foster care. I was also a senior staff attorney for the Children’s Defense Fund.

SB 16 provides needed common-sense reform that benefits everyone:

- SB 16 will benefit children and custodial parents through more consistent and increased child support payments.
- The bill will benefit noncustodial parents by improving their ability to make payments for their children rather than forcing the parents to quit their jobs.
- The bill will benefit Maryland businesses as their employees are less likely to resign due to unmanageable wage garnishments.
- The bill will benefit the child support agency through increased collections and therefore greater federal IV-D incentive funds.
- And the bill will benefit us all—as more low-income parents will be employed in the above-ground economy, paying taxes, and strengthening our communities.

This bill is needed to reduce harm to low-income children and families. Currently, the Maryland child support agency initiates wage garnishments at the maximum of 65% of disposable earnings. Such garnishments leave low-income noncustodial parents in impossible circumstances, with insufficient remaining income to pay rent or buy food or other minimal necessities—leaving many with no choice but to quit. Noncustodial parents who want to support their children are not able

to do so under the current practices. Many low-income obligors are already struggling with other barriers to employment—and the vastly unrealistic garnishments make matters worse, harming children, custodial parents, obligors, businesses, and all of us—as current practices exacerbate systemic poverty and racial inequality.

The Maryland Department of Human Services—which oversees the Maryland child support agency—has supported this needed reform, planning to include it as part of agency sponsored reforms last year in amendments to SB 195/HB 218. In his [oral testimony](#), the Department’s Secretary highlighted reducing the garnishment limit to 25% for low-income noncustodial parents as one of needed equitable reforms that would help in “*improving payment consistency and reliability.*”

Vicki Turetsky, former Commissioner of the Federal Office of Child Support Enforcement, completed a report for the Abell Foundation to analyze the effectiveness of the child support system in Maryland. **Turetsky concluded that the current garnishment of 65 percent of noncustodial parent income is causing harm: “This high withholding rate can have the unintended effect of pushing low-wage parents out of a job, because the remaining paycheck is often too little to survive on.”**¹ The high garnishment rate reduces the ability to pay, reducing child support payments and increasing arrearages. Turetsky explained:

*Parents who owe large child support debts are more likely to become discouraged and leave formal employment, further compromising their ability to support their children. Debt can lead to increased job-hopping, participation in the underground economy, and even generation of illegal income as parents try to support themselves and their children and avoid the child support program.*²

Therefore, Turetsky, who was the nation’s top child support enforcement officer, recommends the exact reform in this bill, reducing the garnishment rate from 65% to 25% for low-income noncustodial parents—because it will lead to increased labor force participation and increased child support payments.

Federal law embraces SB 16. SB 16 is consistent with federal law, which sets a maximum garnishment rate but allows states to set lower rates.³

I therefore submit this testimony in support of SB 16 and respectfully request a favorable report.

¹ Vicki Turetsky, Reforming Child Support to Improve Outcomes for Children and Families, THE ABELL REPORT, Vol. 32, No. 5, June 2019, https://abell.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/Abell20Child20Support20Reform20-20Full20Report202_20_202020edits20v1_3.pdf

² *Id.*

³ *Id.*

Testimony for Jan 29th.pdf

Uploaded by: Demetrious Jones

Position: FAV

Dear Senator Smith and the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

My name is Demetrious Jones, a resident of District 40. I am asking you to support SB 16.

This bill matters to me because it would allow non-custodial parents an opportunity to maintain the basic necessities of life while paying child support. With a 25% cap on garnishment, low-income obligors could pay their rent, keep their utilities on, buy groceries, and afford transportation to and from work. Right now, when the system takes 50-65% of their paychecks, they are forced to choose between these basic needs and staying employed.

Putting a 25% cap on support garnishment would actually encourage non-custodial parents to maintain their child support payments. When people can afford to survive, they stay in their jobs and pay consistently. When the garnishment is so high that they face homelessness or hunger, many feel forced to leave their jobs or find work that pays under the table just to meet their basic needs.

Senate Bill 16 would discourage non-custodial parents from leaving formal employment for lower-paying jobs or under-the-table work. It would allow them the opportunity to be financially consistent in their children's lives. Consistency is what children need most—not just one large payment followed by months of nothing because their parent lost their job.

Low-income obligors want to support their children through formal employment where payments are regular and reliable. This bill would make that possible.

I urge you to support Senate Bill 16. It will help non-custodial parents stay employed, stay housed, and stay consistent in supporting their children.

Please vote yes.

SB0016_HB0142_FAV_JonathanWilliams (1).pdf

Uploaded by: Jonathan Williams

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 16/ HOUSE BILL 142
CHILD SUPPORT - WAGE GARNISHMENTS CAPS 250% FPL

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings and House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Jonathan Williams

My name is Jonathan Williams, and I live in Baltimore City. I support Senate Bill 16/ House Bill 142- Child Support - Wage Garnishments Caps 250% FPL.

I am a father of an 8-year-old whose mother placed me on child support. After we signed the child support order, we had to wait six (6) months for the judge to sign before the order went into effect. I was initially given misleading and/or incomplete information. I was told that I would be unable to make child support payments until the judge signed the order, and that payments would not start until the order was signed. The judge eventually signed the order in August of 2017. It wasn't until I got a notice that my license was suspended that I learned I had over \$ 9,000 in child support arrears. When I signed the order, I knew my monthly payments would be \$840, and court fees would be included. Once the court fees were paid, the costs would drop to \$640 per month.

At the time, I was bringing home around \$ 2,600 per month as an IT Site Coordinator. I started driving for Uber part-time to supplement my income and help pay my child support when the time came. Both jobs required a valid driver's license. My expenses at the time included a \$ 1,200 mortgage, \$500 car payment, \$160 car insurance, \$250 utilities, and \$200 for gas, groceries, and miscellaneous purchases. At the end of the month, I had about \$300 left over. While driving for Uber, I averaged about \$20 per hour, which would have given me a max of \$800 per month in extra income. The immediate arrival of a \$9000+ bill was a huge setback. It was unexpected and instantly put me in a financial bind.

When I contacted the Department of Human Services (DHS), no one I spoke with even listened to understand my situation. I would get similar statements - "You can get your license reinstated when you pay all of your back pay," or "You should have saved the money during those months." It appeared that I wouldn't get any assistance until I paid what was owed. At this point, I gave up because doing the right thing seemed more like a punishment than getting monetary help for my son.

The website even states: "*You have the right to request a review for a modification if there has been a change in circumstances since the order was entered, or if three years have passed since the order was entered or last reviewed for modification. Examples of changes in circumstances that may be grounds for a modification are significant changes in income, changes in work-related daycare costs, changes in health care costs, a change in custody, or a change in the child's financial needs. Contact the Customer Care Center at 1-800-332-6347 for additional information.*"



Nothing in this paragraph was even considered for discussion when I called DHS.

The result was that I had to short-sell my house before it went into foreclosure, and my car was voluntarily repossessed. Soon after, I lost both jobs due to the additional driver's license suspension and found myself in \$50,000 worth of debt. I had to take up odd jobs for minimum wage or work under the table to survive. I fell behind on payments, had no income, and ultimately had my bank account frozen at my son's mother's request. All the money in my account was seized, and every paycheck thereafter was garnished, leaving me with only \$15,000 a year to live on after garnishments.

Despite my interest in paying child support and supporting myself, the aggressive garnishments mean that the best financial option for me is to live off of welfare from the state. How can someone pay child support when they have lost every means of paying it?

I hope this testimony sheds light on what many parents have been through and continue to go through. The rules and regulations, as they currently stand, in some situations hurt more than they help. Please consider that some parents want the best for their child(ren), and that situations like mine are sensitive and require flexibility to be negotiated. Situations like this can be avoided in the future if more than just income is factored into the child support process, so a better judgment can be made before punishment is handed down that is a detriment to all parties involved. Your consideration of these matters and solutions is very much appreciated.

Senate Bill 16/House Bill 142 addresses the issue for lower-income parents by capping the amount of their income that can be garnished for child support. This is a good move to prevent catastrophes like what I went through. I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 16/House Bill 142.

1.27 SB 16- Child Support - Earnings Withholdings

Uploaded by: Rachael Keyes

Position: FAV



SB 16 - Child Support - Earnings Withholdings Limits
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
January 29, 2026
SUPPORT

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair, and members of the committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony in support of Senate Bill 16. This bill will help improve child support compliance by reflecting a low-income parent's actual ability to pay. By aligning child support policy with non-custodial parents' real financial capacity, this legislation helps reduce uncollectible arrears, improves long-term compliance, and strengthens family stability.

The CASH Campaign of Maryland promotes economic advancement for low-to-moderate income individuals and families in Baltimore and across Maryland. CASH accomplishes its mission through operating a portfolio of direct service programs, building organizational and field capacity, and leading policy and advocacy initiatives to strengthen family economic stability. CASH and its partners across the state achieve this by providing free tax preparation services through the IRS program 'VITA', offering free financial education and coaching, and engaging in policy research and advocacy. **Almost 4,000 of CASH's tax preparation clients earn less than \$10,000 annually. More than half earn less than \$20,000.**

Research from the University of Maryland School of Social Work, [Who Pays Child Support? Noncustodial Parents' Payment Compliance](#), shows the critical point that most noncustodial parents want to support their children and do pay when they are financially able. In fact, most parents studied paid at least some child support in a given year. However, compliance decreases sharply when support orders require a share of income that is difficult for the non-custodial parent to pay. The research finds that:

- Parents with stable employment and realistic orders are far more likely to pay consistently.
- Parents whose orders exceeded 20–30% of actual earnings were significantly less likely to comply with their orders.
- Noncustodial parents who paid all their current support typically owed about 18–20% of their income, while those who paid little or nothing were often expected to pay more than half of what they earned.
- Excessive enforcement mechanisms, such as license suspensions or rigid penalties, sever access to work, making payment even less likely.

CASH supports SB 16 because it reflects a shift toward evidence-based child support policy. It recognizes that:

- Economic stability is essential to child support compliance.
- Enforcement strategies should encourage payment, not create barriers to employment.
- Policies that right-size obligations and provide reasonable protections for low-income parents ultimately benefit children by increasing consistent support.

When child support systems are fair, realistic, and accommodate the ability to pay, families are better served. This bill continues Maryland's progress toward a child support framework that prioritizes children's well-being by supporting the non-custodial parents' capacity to contribute.

Thus, we encourage you to return a favorable report for SB 16.

Creating Assets, Savings and Hope

SB16

Uploaded by: Ufuoma Agarin

Position: FAV



LEGISLATIVE BLACK CAUCUS OF MARYLAND, INC.

The Maryland House of Delegates, 6 Bladen Street, Room 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
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February 10, 2026 (to be updated)

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Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett
Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Delegate Bartlett and Members of the Committee,

The Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland offers its strong and favorable support for House Bill 142 - Child Support - Earnings Withholding Limits. This legislation promotes economic stability for working parents, strengthens family well-being, and improves the effectiveness of Maryland's child support system by ensuring that earnings withholding practices remain fair, realistic, and sustainable.

House Bill 142 addresses a critical issue facing many noncustodial parents: excessive earnings withholdings that undermine their ability to meet basic needs, maintain employment, and remain financially stable. When child support obligations are set or enforced at levels that leave parents unable to afford housing, transportation, or food, the result is often job loss, disengagement from the formal workforce, and reduced long-term support for children. By establishing reasonable limits on earnings withholdings, HB 142 helps prevent these counterproductive outcomes.

This bill is particularly important for Black Marylanders and other communities of color, who are disproportionately impacted by wage garnishment, low-wage employment, and systemic barriers to economic mobility. Without appropriate limits, earnings withholdings can deepen financial hardship and increase the risk of noncompliance, and ultimately harm the very children the child support system is designed to protect. House Bill 142 advances equity by aligning child support enforcement with economic reality and promoting consistent, sustainable contributions from parents.

Ultimately, House Bill 142 reflects a balanced, common-sense approach to child support enforcement, one that prioritizes accountability while recognizing the importance of economic stability and workforce participation. By ensuring that earnings withholdings are fair and reasonable, Maryland can improve compliance, strengthen families, and better serve children across the state.

For these reasons, the Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland urges favorable consideration of House Bill 142.

Legislative Black Caucus of Maryland

SB 16 - FAV - Center for Urban Families.pdf

Uploaded by: Zachary Alberts

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 16

Child Support - Earnings Withholdings Limits

TO: Hon. Will Smith, Chair, and Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
FROM: Zachary Alberts, Director of Advocacy

The Center for Urban Families (CFUF), a West Baltimore workforce and family-strengthening community-based organization, advocates for legislation that strengthens urban communities by helping fathers and families achieve stability and economic success.

We are here to strongly voice our support for Senate Bill 16, which would cap the garnishment rate for child support payments of low-income obligors (defined as individuals who make less than 250% of the Federal Poverty Guidelines) at 25%.

As an organization situated at the intersection of fatherhood and workforce development, we have worked with countless fathers facing an impossible choice: stay in a low-wage job where child support garnishment leaves them unable to afford basic necessities, or work under the table to survive while paying what they can toward their support obligations.

In 2019, Vicki Turetsky, who, as a **former commissioner of the Federal Child Support Enforcement office** was responsible for overseeing the child support program for the entire country, authored a report for the Abell Foundation outlining policy recommendations to improve Maryland's child support program. One of the **recommendations was to “reduce the income withholding percentage from 65 percent to 25 percent in cases where parents have low-wage jobs.”** Commissioner Turetsky’s recommendation is based on a deep body of research that:

has found that compliance declines at all income levels when monthly support order amounts are set higher than about 20 percent of the noncustodial parent’s actual gross earnings. This finding holds true in Maryland: Statewide, noncustodial parents were ordered to pay 34 percent of their earnings to current support, but they actually paid only 20 percent.

Like former commissioner Turetsky, SB 16 rightfully recognizes that an obligor is better able to meet their child support when they are able to afford basic needs.

Low-income obligors typically experience frequent transitions in _____ and out of formal employment due to structural barriers such as limited education, criminal records, housing instability, and lack of

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access to transportation. Ideally, the obligor would get a child support order modification each time their employment status changes. In reality, they often lack the knowledge, time, resources, or legal representation necessary to petition the court for downward modifications that would reflect their actual earning capacity. During periods of unemployment or underemployment (such as one's hours varying significantly from week-to-week), child support obligations continue to accrue based on the original order, causing arrearages to accumulate rapidly.

When they do secure formal employment they are quickly hit with wage garnishments up to 65% to address both current support and accumulated arrears. As you can see in the image below, after taxes and garnishment, an obligor earning \$15 per hour may take home as little as \$4.25 per hour, making it impossible to afford rent, food, transportation, and other basic necessities.



Faced with this untenable situation, many obligors quit their formal employment within weeks or months and return to 1099 contract work, informal "grey market" employment, or underground economic activity where wages cannot be garnished.

A Congressional Research Service [report states](#):

CSE officials have the authority to require employers to garnish or withhold as much as 65% of a noncustodial parent's disposable wages toward the payment of child support obligations. For low-income noncustodial parents who are unemployed or underemployed, the current garnishment limits may be too high. The maximum garnishment percentage of 65% may increase the difficulty of securing and maintaining



housing, transportation, and employment that are essential for providing the stability and income necessary for making future child support payments.

Several studies indicate that some low-income noncustodial parents facing substantial child support arrearages and income withholding sometimes become discouraged and leave formal employment.

Senate Bill 16 is fundamentally about increasing obligors' ability to pay child support. A 25% garnishment cap allows obligors to meet their basic needs while still contributing meaningfully to their children's support. This approach aligns Maryland's policy with decades of research showing that reasonable payment expectations increase compliance rates and keep obligors engaged in formal employment. By reducing garnishment rates for our lowest-income obligors, it creates the conditions that actually enable them to support their children both now and over the long term.

I urge the Committee to give Senate Bill 16 a favorable report.



2026 01 27 SB 16_FLSC_UNFAV.pdf

Uploaded by: Brendan Madden

Position: UNF

To: Members of The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Family Law Section Council (FLSC)

Date: January 27, 2026

Subject: Senate Bill 16:
Child Support – Earnings Withholdings Limits

Position: **UNFAVORABLE**

The Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) FLSC opposes Senate Bill 16.

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Family Law Section Council (“FLSC”) of the Maryland State Bar Association (“MSBA”). The FLSC is the formal representative of the Family and Juvenile Law Section of the MSBA, which promotes the objectives of the MSBA by improving the administration of justice in the field of family law and, at the same time, tries to bring together the members of the MSBA who are concerned with family laws and in reforms and improvements in such laws through legislation or otherwise. The FLSC is charged with general supervision and control of the affairs of the Section and authorized to act for the Section in any way in which the Section itself could act. The Section has over 1,100 attorney members.

The FLSC believes that adoption of this bill will undermine and conflict with Maryland’s well-established statutory child support scheme, which is premised on a judicial determination of child support through the application of the Maryland Child Support Guidelines. Under that scheme, the amount of support is based on a determination of “actual income” under Md. Code Ann., 12-201(b), while Senate Bill 16, meanwhile, would automatically limit the total garnishment of a child support order on the basis of “disposable earnings,” a different and more narrow standard lifted from the comparable federal law, namely, the Consumer Credit Protection Act (“CCPA”), found at 15 U.S. 1601 et seq. “Actual income” under FL 12-201 is a broadly defined term, and includes salaries, wages, commissions, bonuses, dividend income, interest income, trust income, annuity income, Social Security benefits, workers’ compensation benefits, unemployment insurance benefits, disability insurance benefits, third party payments for the benefit of a minor child, alimony or other maintenance, and expense reimbursements or in-kind payments received in the course of employment that reduce the parent’s living expenses. Id. Beyond these “mandatory” considerations, the statute also provides that “[b]ased on the circumstances of the case,” actual income may also include severance pay, capital gains, gifts, or prizes.”

Meanwhile, the thresholds for garnishment under the CCPA are based instead on “disposable earnings,” itself a subset of the broader term “earnings.” “Earnings” is defined as “compensation paid or payable for personal services, whether denominated as wages, salary, commission, bonus, or otherwise, and includes periodic payments pursuant to a pension or retirement program.” 15 U.S.C. 1672(a). Meanwhile, “disposable earnings” is a subset of this already narrow term and is defined as “that part of the earnings of any individual remaining after the deduction from those earnings of any amounts required by law to be withheld.” 15 U.S.C. 1672(b).

Both “earnings” and “disposable earnings” are significantly more narrow in scope than the “actual income” that Maryland courts must use to calculate child support in the first place. The CCPA actually accounts for this conflict, since it expressly sets a higher garnishment rate for child and spousal support compared to all other garnishment orders. Under the CCPA, garnishment is ordinarily capped at 25% of an individual’s “disposable earnings” per week. 15 U.S.C. 1673 (a). For child and spousal support orders, however, that threshold is increased to 50-65% of an individual’s “disposable earnings, depending on whether the individual is responsible for the support of another spouse or dependent child.” 15 U.S.C. 1673(b)(2).

Senate Bill 16 conflicts with both Maryland and Federal law. It would not only undermine the central and well-established role of the Judiciary to determine and award an appropriate amount of child support (rather than a downstream, non-adjudicative body like the Child Support Administration), but also risk bringing Maryland into conflict with federal child support laws and threaten our State’s eligibility for associated federal funding. Moreover, the Maryland child support guidelines already address the issues applicable to lower income parents by containing, as part of the algorithm, the self-support reserve in those cases which trigger that analysis based on the actual income of the party as determined by the Judge.

For the reasons above, the MSBA FLSC **opposes Senate Bill 16** and urges an unfavorable committee report.

Should you have any questions, please contact Michelle Smith at 410-280-1700 or msmith@lawannapolis.com. Or, contact Brendan Madden at bmadden@rghlawyers.com.

SB0016_DHS_UNF.pdf

Uploaded by: Justin Hayes

Position: UNF



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

January 29, 2026

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

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB0016 - CHILD SUPPORT - EARNINGS WITHHOLDING LIMITS -
POSITION: UNFAVORABLE**

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 an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 16 (SB 16).

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. The Child Support Administration (CSA) is responsible for ensuring that children receive the support of both parents, including various enforcement programs that are utilized when a parent is unwilling to pay without punishing parents who want to pay but are unable. Wage withholding is one such enforcement program, wherein a court orders that a portion of a parent's wages must be diverted to support their child.

Fundamentally, DHS agrees with the sponsors of SB 16 that more can be done to assist parents experiencing difficulties paying their support obligation amounts. However, we disagree with the way this bill approaches this challenge. We disagree because SB 16 will reduce the amount of available resources for children, and increase child support debt (arrears) for parents. If enacted, the bill would make it impossible to administer Maryland's child support program in a lawful manner, risking federal funding for cash assistance programs and the effective administration of the child support program.

In addition to simply reducing the overall dollar amount of resources their children will receive, SB 16 would also harm the parents it seeks to help.

Regardless of the amount garnished via a wage withholding notice, the underlying child support order is still in effect. Parents whose wage withholding is capped under SB 16 would make partial payments toward their court-ordered support obligation, causing child support debt (arrears) to accumulate. As a result, parents could face other enforcement actions, including professional license suspensions, passport revocations, credit bureau reporting, tax refund intercepts, state and federal payment offsets, seizure of assets, and civil or criminal contempt proceedings in which a parent may become incarcerated. Rather than the oversimplified “withholding cap” proposed in SB 16, CSA assists parents who are struggling to pay their child support obligations by modifying their support orders with the court. Unlike the negative outcomes possible with SB 16, right-sizing child support orders prevents child support debt (arrears) from piling up and avoids additional enforcement actions.

To implement SB 16, CSA would be required to do the following prior to issuing wage withholding notices within two business days, as required by federal law:

- 1) determine if the parent was found to be voluntarily impoverished at the time of their most recent order;
- 2) if not, determine the parent’s income for the current calendar year;
- 3) determine if the current year income exceeds 250% FPL, including determining the parent’s household size;
- 4) if not, calculate the parent’s disposable earnings; and
- 5) issue the wage withholding notice for 25% of the disposable earnings.

There is no automated mechanism to access current year income or calculating disposable earnings. CSA would need to hire new staff to manually locate income information and calculate wage withholding amounts. Additionally, major updates to the Child Support Management System (CSMS) would be necessary. In total, implementing SB 16 would cost at least \$5M in FY 2027 alone.

In addition to the reduced resources for Maryland children and increased costs for implementing SB 16, CSA is concerned this proposal will make it impossible to maintain compliance with related federal law. Federal regulations outline penalties for states that are out of compliance with Title IV-D, the Social Security Act child support program requirements. In addition to potential loss of federal child support administrative funds, there is a financial penalty for noncompliance of up to 5% of a state’s Temporary Assistance for Needy Families (TANF) block grant. Maryland’s TANF block grant allocation is fixed at \$228M and would be subject to a penalty of up to a maximum of 5% (\$11.4M) if Maryland’s program becomes noncompliant with federal law. TANF funding supports vital assistance for low-income Marylanders, including

Temporary Cash Assistance, Emergency Assistance to Families with Children, and Welfare Avoidance Grants.

In contrast to the Departmental legislation that DHS offered during the 2025 legislative session, SB 16 offers no new sources of child support revenues to offset its financial impact on parents, children, and families.

SB 16 differs from the wage withholding amendments that DHS introduced as part of our departmental child support omnibus bill last year ([HB218/SB195](#), 2025) in two significant ways. First, the withholding cap in the 2025 bill would have been implemented as a hardship request *after* CSA issued a wage withholding notice for the full support order amount. This implementation strategy enables CSA to maintain compliance with federal requirements while providing low-income parents a reduced payment while CSA helps them right-size their child support order. Second, the full child support omnibus proposal would have expanded our overall child support collection, such as garnishing wages of parents working as independent contractors and intercepting winnings from sports betting.

Wage withholding is the single most effective means for parents to provide child support payments, with nearly 70% of payments collected via this mechanism. Overnight, implementing SB 16 would establish the nation's lowest limits for child support wage withholding, greatly reducing CSA's capacity to collect support and direct resources to children. If signed into law, SB 16 would reduce funds for families and could lead to an increase in the number of families seeking cash assistance and Supplemental Nutrition Assistance Program (SNAP) benefits, while simultaneously increasing Maryland General Fund expenditures and reducing federal fund drawdowns.

We appreciate the opportunity to offer 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,



Rafael López
Secretary