



House Judiciary Committee
February 26, 2026
House Bill 1272 – *Family Law – Kinship Care*
POSITION: SUPPORT

The Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics (MDAAP) is a statewide association representing more than 1,100 pediatricians and allied pediatric and adolescent healthcare practitioners in the State and is a strong and established advocate promoting the health and safety of all the children we serve. On behalf of MDAAP, we submit this letter of **support** for House Bill 1272.

House Bill 1272 strengthens kinship care placement practices by requiring local departments to consider a child’s feelings and views when selecting a prospective kinship caregiver. It also requires that the Local Department consider the following factors when determining whether to approve an individual as a caregiver:

- (1) The individual’s knowledge and understanding of the circumstances that led to the need for the child’s placement;
- (2) The individual’s previous involvement in helping or protecting the child;
- (3) The individual’s previous involvement in preventing occurrences of abuse or maltreatment of the child;
- (4) The individual’s current ability to protect the child;
- (5) The individual’s ability to understand the need for protection of the child; and
- (6) The individual’s willingness to cooperate with the local department.

Children experience profound stress when separated from their families and placed in out-of-home care. Research and clinical practice show that children’s perspectives are crucial in determining what best supports their emotional, social, and developmental well-being. Listening to children, especially in decisions about who will raise or care for them, aligns with pediatric best practices for trauma-informed care.

House Bill 1272’s emphasis on incorporating children’s views reflects a holistic, child-centered approach to welfare that values their voices and lived experiences. It also aligns with the AAP’s longstanding commitment to family-based solutions, continuity of caregiving relationships, cultural and linguistic connection, and minimizing trauma associated with out-of-home placement.

House Bill 1272’s focus on the ability of the prospective caregiver to keep the child safe is also very important. If a kinship caregiver does not believe that abuse occurred, they are more

likely to allow unsupervised contact with an abuser and allow abuse to continue. If a kinship caregiver is unable to protect the child, e.g., because of physical frailty, the abuser could take the child away by force. If the kinship caregiver is unwilling to cooperate with the local department, it becomes impossible to assure the child's ongoing safety.

By requiring local departments to consider a broad range of factors, including familial bonds, existing relationships, and a potential caregiver's ability to protect and nurture a child, this bill promotes stability and healthy development. For these reasons, MDAAP strongly supports House Bill 1272 and urges the House Judiciary Committee to give it a favorable report, helping Maryland uphold the voices and well-being of children in kinship care decisions.

For more information call:

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