

Written Testimony in Favor of House Bill 25

Good afternoon,

Thank you Delegate Addison for inviting me to testify for a second time. My name is Janice Harris. I am a 63 yrs old service connected disabled veteran who is the proud mother to 4 adult children and the doting grandmother to 11 grandchildren.

I am also a de facto parent to one of those grandchildren. His name is Ian. As a de facto parent I raised Ian since he was 13 months old. Ian will be 12 in June. During those first 8 yrs as the sole/ primary caregiver I have imprinted an unbreakable, loving maternal bond and immeasurable, core memories with Ian as I worked tirelessly to stabilize, educate, nurture, support, and advocate for him and all of his special needs.

In September 2023 the Circuit Court for Baltimore City Family Division unjustly reduced my access to Ian to 2 hours every other weekend, at my cost! And for context, as a grandparent, in order for Ian and I to see each other, I must pay \$160 every two weeks. This is a travesty and an absolute miscarriage of justice that is now coming up on 3 years!

This is not in the best interest of Ian, a special needs child who was yanked from a loving, stable home with his Nana and placed in a well-documented abusive and neglectful environment with his father. I am the only person on Ian's maternal side that his father allows to contact/ visit with Ian and my access is only because of the court order.

In closing, It is true that it takes a village to raise a child. Grandparents are a vital part of the richness that is beautiful, and complex, and creates loving core-memories and lifelong experiences for children. As my beautiful Ian continues to grow, it is true that he will be unpacking all of these childhood traumas perhaps for a lifetime. Yet one undeniable fact is that he will also have his lifetime to savor and cherish the beautiful, warm and unwavering loving core memories of his life with me, his Nana, his de facto parent who is also his maternal grandmother.

Thank you all for your time and much consideration in passing House Bill 25 in support of grandparents in Maryland.

Warm regards,
Janice Harris