



House Judiciary Committee

February 26, 2026

House Bill 1290 – *Child in Need of Assistance – Proceedings – Child's Right to be Present*

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 1290.

MDAAP affirms that children who are the subject of a Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) proceeding have the right to be present during hearings. This legislation reflects the principle that children's voices are central to decisions that directly affect their lives and well-being.

Research and clinical experience show that children benefit from being included in decisions about their care and safety whenever appropriate. At the same time, children who have experienced trauma require supports that make participation safe and developmentally appropriate. House Bill 1290 balances these considerations by allowing exclusion only when it is in the child's best interest and after careful evaluation, while requiring courts to consider less restrictive alternatives, such as remote participation, schedule adjustments, trauma-informed support, or time-limited physical presence.

By codifying these protections, House Bill 1290 ensures that children are heard and actively engaged in proceedings that impact them, while maintaining safeguards to prevent unnecessary distress. This approach aligns with pediatric best practices and promotes child-centered, trauma-informed policies in legal and child welfare systems.

For these reasons, the MDAAP strongly supports House Bill 1290 and urges the House Judiciary Committee to give the bill a favorable report, advancing children's rights and well-being in Maryland's child welfare system.

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