



#NoExcuses
#FreedomFamilyFinance

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Written Testimony — House Bill 25

Good afternoon, Chair and Members of the Committee.

My name is Janette Graham, I am a dedicated reentry leader who works every day to support families impacted by incarceration — and I am also a grandmother. Today, I stand before you not just as an advocate, but as someone whose family has lived this reality.

My son is serving a 25-year sentence in Maryland. While he pays his debt to society, our family — especially my granddaughter — has paid a debt of its own. Throughout his incarceration, the birth mother has withheld access to our granddaughter and has — at times — used the child as leverage for financial gain. Because I have no legal rights, I have been powerless to ensure that my granddaughter receives the love, stability, and relationship she deserves with her extended family. This has caused pain not only for me, but for a little girl who suffers through emotional disconnection through no fault of her own.

What we are discussing with House Bill 25 is not just legal language — it is about a child's well-being, love, and continuity of care. This bill updates Maryland's grandparent visitation statute so that courts may consider and even must grant visitation rights when a child has lived with a grandparent for at least 12 months or when it is in the best interest of the child. It recognizes that children thrive when supported by a loving network — especially when a parent is incarcerated. Additionally, I have walked out of jail or prison over 289 individuals from parole, sentence modifications, inter-state compact transfers and top need for parents is family unification this can be a barrier for those family connectors can be beneficial apart of the law when House Bill 25 is considered to avoid unnecessary family blended challenges and the childhood adverse experiences of neglect and abandonment is done to a child, we see if later on in school and social skills and relationships.

I do not want my granddaughter to grow up believing that one bad decision — or the actions of adults — means she is undeserving of family. I want her to know that love isn't conditional, and family shouldn't be optional. This bill would give families like mine a chance to stay connected, to heal, and to help a child grow with love and support.

For those reasons, I urge a favorable report on House Bill 25, so that Maryland can keep families strong and ensure our children never suffer alone.

Thank you.

Janette Graham
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Serving justice impacted individuals across the state of Maryland