

Jessica A. Quincosa, Esq.
Executive Director

Kayla Williams-Campbell, Esq.
Deputy Director

Lisa Sarro, Esq.
Director of Litigation &
Advocacy



HB 923 – Family Law – Equity Courts – Care and Custody of Children (Uniform Nondiscrimination in Treatment of Evidence (UNITE) Act)

**Hearing Before the Judiciary Committee
February 26, 2026**

Position: FAVORABLE

To the Honorable Members of the Judiciary Committee:

[Community Legal Services](#) (CLS) supports House Bill 923. CLS provides free legal services to income-eligible Marylanders, with a goal of ensuring that all Marylanders have equal access to justice. We provide legal advice and representation to thousands of individuals and families every year. We strive to help our clients obtain and maintain family, housing, social and economic stability.

HB 923 affirms that, in Maryland, all children will be treated equally in all matters involving their care and custody, regardless of their immigration status. It requires that equity courts in Maryland protect against discriminatory practices, implicit bias, and procedural disparities that could harm a child's stability or long-term welfare. This includes applying the same evidentiary standards and procedure in a custody or guardianship case for an immigrant child as are applied for a child who is a U.S. citizen.

This bill makes clear that Courts may not impose more restrictive requirements for proof of identity or immigration status in immigrant children's cases than in comparable cases involving citizen children and confirms that a child's identity or age can be established through reliable evidence such as foreign or domestic birth certificates, school or medical records, sworn testimony or affidavits from a parent, guardian, or caregiver, and any other documents the court finds reliable, and prohibits a court from requiring a government-issued photo ID as the only way to prove a child's identity or age or otherwise delaying proceedings for lack of a government-issued photo ID. However, at the same time, HB 923 retains the authority of courts to request any additional evidence needed to comply with federal Special Immigrant Juvenile Status (SIJ) law.

The bill strikes an appropriate balance between the goal of equal treatment in the legal system and the occasional need for variations to comply with federal immigration law. HB 923 makes a clear statement regarding the intent of the Maryland General Assembly: all children should be – and deserve to be – treated equally in our courts in all matters related to their care and custody, regardless of immigration or citizenship status, while at the same time allowing courts to seek additional evidence when needed to comply with federal law.

For these reasons, Community Legal Services respectfully urges the Judiciary Committee to **issue a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 923**. Please feel free to contact Lisa Sarro, Esq., at Sarro@clspgc.org or Jessica Quincosa, Esq., at Quincosa@clspgc.org with any questions.