

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.



HB1198 – Civil Actions - Coerced Debt - Debtor Protections

House Judiciary Committee

March 11, 2026

Position: SUPPORT

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1992 who are concerned about the care of Maryland's most vulnerable children and work together to educate and promote meaningful child welfare reform. **CPMC urges a favorable report on HB1198 - Civil Actions - Coerced Debt - Debtor Protections.**

HB1198 seeks to develop new civil actions for a victim of identify theft who has been forced into a coerced debt by allowing the ability to challenge the debt, obtain injunctive relief from debt collection efforts, and recover damages related to the debt. Our coalition appreciates the inclusion of children in out-of-home placements or foster care as Marylanders eligible for these types of relief. Our members have concerns about foster youth aging out of the system who are caught unaware that their identities have been compromised and that financial accounts have been created without their knowledge or consent. Fraudulent or inaccurate credit reports frustrate the ability to successful transition into independent adulthood, such as housing, employment, school loans, or other financing. Foster children are at high risk of identity theft as their personal identification information can be accessed by numerous parties while they are in the child welfare system.

2014 federal law requires annual credit checks of youth 14 years and older who had been in the foster care system for at least 6 months. [A recent study](#) conducted by the U.S. Department of Health and Human Services Office of the Inspector General found that in a sample of foster care children assessed in 2021, over half did not have this credit check conducted. In fact, four percent of the children had credit reports, which is disconcerting since minors do not generally have the legal capacity to sign a contract or apply for credit. All 50 states and Washington, DC, participated in the study which also reported challenges case workers often face to “assist the child in interpreting and resolving any inaccuracies on an individual basis”.

We welcome any efforts that can be made to further the success of these young people who have been placed in the care of the state. It is for these reasons that the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children **urges a favorable report on HB1198 - Civil Actions - Coerced Debt - Debtor Protections.**¹

¹ Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include – Center for Hope, Citizen's Review Board for Children Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA - Baltimore County), Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), National Association of Social Workers – MD (NASW), the State Council on Child Abuse & Neglect (SCCAN), and individual members of the coalition.