



HB384 - Family Law - Child Support - Capacity of Minors to File Action
February 5, 2026
Position: FAVORABLE

Maryland Legal Aid submits written and oral testimony on HB 384

Maryland Legal Aid asks that the Committee report **favorably** on HB 384, which allows minor parents to petition for child support on behalf of their children. Maryland Legal Aid serves residents in each of Maryland's 24 jurisdictions, providing free legal services to the State's low-income and vulnerable residents in a range of civil legal matters. Maryland Legal Aid is Maryland's largest civil non-profit law firm, representing vulnerable young people in Child in Need of Assistance (CINA) matters across the State. Maryland Legal Aid also represents both custodial and non-custodial parents in child support matters. This proposed legislation is an important measure to provide support and financial stability to children.

Children of minor parents need the basics—food, clothing, medical care, education, and stable housing—and meeting those needs can be costly. Accordingly, a minor parent must be able to petition for child support because, like any parent, they are entitled to receive financial assistance to help care for their child.

Under current law, minor parents who cannot petition the court on their own behalf must rely upon a parent or guardian to initiate a child support action for them. This requirement could create a significant barrier for minor parents in foster care who have physical custody of their child and may not have a parent or guardian available or willing to file on their behalf. These minor parents are fully responsible for the care of their child, financial and otherwise, and should be able to receive the support their child is entitled to. They may not be able to depend on their parent, who may have been abusive, neglectful, unsupportive, or otherwise uninvolved in their life.

By having the ability to file for child support, the minor parent can receive financial assistance from the other parent, which can help them provide for their child. Additionally, it can help establish that both parents are legally involved in supporting their child's upbringing. This can also give the minor parent more stability and the resources they need to continue their own education or work toward becoming self-sufficient while raising their child.

Child support can help relieve some of the financial burden that comes with being a parent at a young age. The children of minor parents should not go without child support.

Maryland Legal Aid urges the Committee to issue a FAVORABLE report on House Bill 384 and urge its ultimate passage. If you have any questions, please contact: Erica I. LeMon, Advocacy Director for Children's Rights at elemon@mdlab.org (410) 951-7648 or (410) 935-0937.