

HB0942

Position: FAV

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Written Testimony in Support of HB 942 (Three Strikes Custody Interference)

Good afternoon, Chair, Vice Chair, and members of the committee. Thank you for your time and careful consideration.

My name is Brian Fitzgerald. I am a father, and like everyone in this room, I am also someone's child.

HB 942 addresses a very specific and narrow issue. It concerns repeated, knowing, and willful interference with an existing custody order issued by a Maryland court.

This bill does not apply to emergency situations. It does not override judicial discretion. It does not criminalize misunderstandings or isolated mistakes.

It does not apply where a court has made a safety finding or modified an order based on substantiated concerns.

It applies only when a court with jurisdiction has already issued a custody order and that order is intentionally disregarded more than once.

The structure of the bill is deliberate and proportional.

First, a documented written warning.

Then modest civil fines.

Only after multiple, willful violations does it rise to misdemeanor consequences.

That graduated approach ensures accountability matches the pattern of conduct.

Without structured enforcement, repeated violations can become normalized. When court orders are repeatedly ignored, both the authority of the court and the stability of the child are undermined.

This bill does not seek punishment for its own sake. It seeks consistency.

It creates documentation so repeat violations are recognized as repeat violations. It provides predictability so expectations are clear. It reinforces that custody orders issued for the benefit of children must be respected.

HB 942 is narrow, measured, and focused on repeated, intentional conduct.

Stability for children depends on consistency. Consistency depends on enforceable court orders.

When a Maryland court issues a custody order, that order should carry meaningful weight.

I respectfully urge your favorable consideration to ensure that repeated, knowing violations are addressed consistently and that both the authority of the court and the stability of the child are protected.

Thank you.