



February 26, 2026

House Judiciary Committee

**House Bill 1258 — Child Placement Services – Advertising by Unlicensed Person – Prohibition**

**Position:** SUPPORT

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1258: Child Placement Services- Advertising by Unlicensed Person Prohibition.

My name is Meshan Lehmann, and I am a licensed Maryland social worker with ten years of experience working with expectant parents, adoptive families, and children navigating the complexities of adoption. I am here because I have seen firsthand the harm that occurs when unlicensed adoption facilitators market services in Maryland without accountability or understanding our laws.

About two years ago, our agency was called in to address the aftermath of an adoption case involving unethical practices. An expectant mother from Maryland saw a sponsored online advertisement from an out-of-state agency promising financial assistance. She was flown to another state, matched with an out-of-state adoptive family, and completed an adoption process there.

What that agency failed to do was verify that she was legally married-a critical legal factor. Six months later, her husband successfully asserted his parental rights. The adoption was overturned, and the child was returned to Maryland.

The devastation was immeasurable. The husband and his family endured the trauma of discovering their child had been placed without their knowledge and endured a difficult legal battle for 6 months. The adoptive family experienced profound grief and financial hardship. And the mother was caught in the middle of a painful, preventable legal crisis- one that began with a targeted online ad exploiting her vulnerability.

Unfortunately, this was not an isolated case.

When unlicensed facilitators are used, expectant parents are often steered into processes that prioritize speed and placement over legal protection. I have seen Maryland mothers waive the safeguards our state provides and proceed under less protective laws, sometimes without birth father rights properly addressed or meaningful counseling about all of their options. These arrangements involve shorter revocation periods and no little or no post-adoption support which increases the risk of coercion, legal disruption, and long-term harm for everyone involved.

The bottom line is this: If a facilitator does not know Maryland law, they cannot provide accurate information. And if they cannot provide accurate information, they cannot ensure informed consent.

House Bill 1258 ensures that those marketing adoption services in our state are licensed, accountable, and knowledgeable about Maryland law.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Meshan Lehmann". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal flourish at the end.

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