

KAREN SIMPSON
Legislative District 3
Frederick County

Judiciary Committee
Chair
Family Law Subcommittee



The Maryland House of Delegates
6 Bladen Street, Room 221
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3436
800-492-7122 Ext. 3436
Karen.Simpson@house.maryland.gov

THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Favorable: HB 324 – Family Law – Child Support – Assignment of Rights

Hearing on 2/5/2026 at 1:00 PM

Family Law - Child Support - Assignment of Rights

TO: The Honorable Sandy Bartlett, Chair, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Delegate Karen Simpson

DATE: February 5th, 2026

For the record, I am Delegate Karen Simpson here today, presenting House Bill 324 for your consideration, which allows the Department of Human Services to abandon the harmful practice of collecting state-owed child support payments from parents whose children are in foster care – except in rare circumstances where such collections would be appropriate. Similar to other legislation discussed before this committee, this bill's language was taken from DHS's Omnibus Child Support Reform Bill last year, giving it the tacit support of the Department and the family law advocates.

Many parents whose children are placed in foster care are already struggling. They often have trouble paying rent, buying food, finding transportation, or keeping a steady job. When a child is taken into foster care, life becomes even harder for these parents. Right now, Maryland allows the government to charge parents child support even when their children are in foster care. This money does not go to the child. Instead, the state keeps the money to pay itself back for foster care costs. This practice is called cost recovery.

Between 2020 and 2024, Maryland collected over \$2.6 million from parents whose children were in foster care. Many parents cannot afford these payments, so they end up with debt owed to the government. This makes it harder for them to get back on their feet and reunite with their children.

Research shows that charging parents for foster care hurts families. It pushes parents deeper into poverty and can delay children from returning home. Studies also show this practice does not save money. In some cases, Maryland spent more on collecting child support than it actually received.

In 2022, the federal government told states that child support should not be the default option for parents with children in foster care. Federal officials explained that charging struggling parents makes it harder for families to stabilize and reunite. Several states—such as California, Michigan, and Washington—have already stopped or limited this practice.

House Bill 324 would do the same in Maryland. The bill would stop the state from routinely filing child support cases against parents with children in foster care while allowing these cases to emerge only in rare situations

Families involved in the child welfare system need support, not punishment. Charging parents child support while their children are in foster care takes money away from housing, food, and transportation—things families need to reunite. For these reasons, I strongly urge a favorable report.