



From: Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs
Date: February 24, 2026
Re: HB 923 – UNITE Act
Position: Favorable

Dear Chairperson J. Sandy Bartlett, and Vice Chairperson, Debra Davis, and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

My name is Mari Dorn-Lopez, and I serve as Deputy Director of the Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs. Our office is testifying in favor of HB 923, UNITE Act. Pursuant to our founding legislation, our Office is charged with supporting the meaningful and successful integration of immigrants into Maryland's civic, social, and economic life. Among other things, this includes ensuring that immigrants in Maryland receive fair treatment under the law.

House Bill 923 will help fulfill that mandate by ensuring that individuals appearing before Maryland's courts are afforded equitable treatment and are not subjected to barriers that impede access to justice. This is particularly important when dealing with children. Having worked directly with immigrant children and families for more than a decade, I have witnessed firsthand the challenges they face when navigating complex court systems, particularly in matters involving child custody and guardianship. HB 923 does not seek to create special treatment; rather, it ensures consistency and equity by aligning court practices so that immigrant and non-immigrant children are treated under the same legal standards and procedures.

This legislation affirms that Maryland equity courts must apply the same legal standards and procedural requirements in child custody and guardianship proceedings involving immigrant children as are applied in cases involving U.S. citizen children. By doing so, the bill reinforces the principle that a child's immigration status should not determine the protections or standards applied by our courts.

In Maryland, we "leave no one behind" and HB 923 represents an important step toward honoring that commitment for immigrant families accessing state courts.

For these reasons, I respectfully urge your favorable consideration of HB 923 and your continued support of policies that promote fairness and nondiscrimination in custody proceedings, regardless of a child's citizenship.

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration.

Sincerely,

Mari Dorn-Lopez
Deputy Director
Governor's Office of Immigrant Affairs