

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.



HB1272 - Family Law – Kinship Care House Judiciary Committee February 26, 2026

Position: SUPPORT

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1992 who are concerned about the care of Maryland's most vulnerable children and work together to educate and promote meaningful child welfare reform. **CPMC urges a favorable report on HB1272 - Family Law – Kinship Care.**

In the last few years, Maryland has dedicated increased time and energy into placing out-of-home youth with kinship caregivers – family members, relatives, or fictive kin. In updating its regulations in December 2024 to support these efforts, the vetting provisions by local social service workers identifying appropriate and safe placements for children were (we believe inadvertently) struck from COMAR.

HB1272 seeks to establish the child-centered, safety-first provisions into statute so that these are less likely to be lost in the shuffle again. Although being placed with kin may be a positive and welcoming experience for some children, others may not feel as protected or cared for with certain relatives or friends known to the family. This vetting process is crucial for a child to be healthy, safe, and thriving after experiencing any confusion or trauma which occurred triggering the child's removal from their custody and care of their parent or legal guardian. The bill language seeks to establish that the process shall consider the child's feelings and perspectives about the potential placement. The process also shall include assessment of whether the potential caregiver understands the safety needs of the child, is able to protect the child, willing to care for the child, and willing to work with the local department and parents. Our main concerns about the absence of this vetting are not only the risk of ignoring the child's own assessment of the situation and whether being placed with the potential kinship caregiver is in their own best interests but also identifying a potential kin caregiver who is unwilling to abide by safety plans and court orders due to conflicted loyalties or collusion. We must ensure that the kin caregiver will be committed to placing the safety and health of the child first.

It is for these reasons that the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children **urges a favorable report on HB1272 - Family Law – Kinship Care.**¹

¹ Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include – the American Academy of Pediatrics - Maryland Chapter, Child Justice, Center for Hope, Citizen's Review Board for Children, Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA - Baltimore County), The Family Tree, Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), Maryland Legal Aid, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, National Association of Social Workers – MD (NASW), the State Council on Child Abuse & Neglect (SCCAN).

