



OUT FOR JUSTICE

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 16/HOUSE BILL 142:

Child Support – Earnings Withholdings Limits

TO: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings and House Judiciary Committee

FROM: Aprille Hamilton

Members of the committee, my name is Aprille Hamilton. I am a member of Out For Justice, living in State District 8, and I support Senate Bill 16/House Bill 142, which limits the amount of wages that can be withheld for child support for low-income parents, so we can meet our basic needs while continuing to support our children. I am in a very unique position in that I am both paying child support for one of my children while receiving child support for another.

I have a 13-year-old daughter from a previous relationship and a three-year-old that I am raising alone. I left my last relationship after surviving multiple domestic violence situations with my ex, the father of my oldest daughter. It was not easy. After I left, I struggled to secure housing, ending up in a shelter and eventually losing custody of my oldest child. Subsequently, I was placed on child support, my wages were garnished, and my driver's license was suspended. My quality of life plummeted significantly, and I had to reach back out to him, my abuser, and plead with him to drop the order, which he eventually did. I am blessed that the situation worked the way that it did, but no one should have to plead with their abuser to repeal a child support case.

Years later, I moved to Alaska to work as a waitress on a cruise ship. During this time, another child support order was issued for my daughter. Because I was not in the state, I never received notice and had no opportunity to respond or explain my circumstances. I now owe thousands in arrears and have endured repeated license suspensions and the 65% wage garnishment, which, after expenses, effectively leaves my income at \$0 annually. Thankfully, I have a significant other whom I can rely on to meet my basic necessities, but this is unsustainable.

This cycle of garnishment and suspension made it harder to keep a job, get to work, and move forward. I want to work and support my children, but when most of your paycheck is taken out before you ever see it, it feels like you are being set up to fail. With inflation not keeping pace with wages, I don't think a 65% garnishment is realistic for those on the lower end of the income spectrum. I was excited to hear that this would be addressed this year in Maryland, especially now that I can maintain my driver's license thanks to the bill you all passed last year.

If Senate Bill 16 is passed into law, I will be able to work toward stability instead of constantly trying to catch up. For these reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report.