

Testimony to Support HB1242

Christine Marr

Dear Sir and Madam Delegates:

Thank you for your service and hearing this testimony. I am writing to urge you to support HB1242 to protect parents' fundamental right for the welfare and major decision making for their children. Parents naturally have a fundamental right to directly care for their children including making educational, caregiving and safety protections of their children. There have been various bills that have submitted during this legislative session attacking and attempting to bypass parental rights.

In 1979 the Supreme Court ruled that children and adolescents are unable to make sound judgements for many decisions, and that parents can and must make those judgements, including their medical care needs. This right is also recognized in divorce cases where joint or sole custody is determined and parents in custody have rights to make decisions and directly oversee care and make decisions for major things including education, religion, medical treatment and direct care.

Parents are the most invested and able to care for their children. Their love and bonding, their emotional, physical and functional investments and responsibilities for their children make them best able to care for their children. This is such a very profound and natural right of our species it is difficult for me to put into words, yet I hope you can consider what I mean by this. The state has laws in place to protect children for relatively very rare instances of child abuse and neglect, and programs to help parents when able to gain the support they need to rectify those issues and resume their natural right to care for their children.

In my 25 years experience as a licensed marriage and family therapist I'm deeply familiar with the research literature on child and adolescent cognitive development and the literature abounds with evidence that children and adolescent brain development is incomplete, which often leads to impulsive risk taking, poor judgement and inability to comprehensively assess and project future consequences. In our larger American culture adolescence is typically a time of individuation and launching which is a process that takes trial and error, can be rife with conflict and reactively and I firmly belief is most successfully passed through with parental guidance for the transition into adulthood. While children

may look and sometimes start to do some adult like activities in adolescence they are still growing and developing and need parental guidance. In my observation in clinical and non-clinical educational settings adolescents routinely demonstrate wavering feelings about parental support, expressing their strong desire for independence one minute and their strong desire for parental support and guidance the next. It is critical to their adult success that this part of the parent and family relationship not be circumvented and undermined by government intervention.

Again, I urge you to support passing HB1242. Thank you for reading this and for your service to Marylanders.

Sincerely,

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