



Testimony before House Judiciary Committee  
House Bill 930  
Family Law - Removal of a Child from Home – Meetings  
February 18, 2021

**\*\* OPPOSE \*\***

On behalf of the National Association of Social Workers – Maryland Chapter, an organization representing social workers statewide, we are asking you to oppose House Bill 930, Family Law - Removal of a Child from Home – Meetings.

This bill is an effort to legislate what are called ‘blind removals’ – the erasure of a child’s demographics and culture and a family’s past history of child involvement – when CPS is making decisions about removing a maltreated child from their home. Some mistakenly believe this strategy would be effective at reducing the disproportionate representation of Black children in our public child welfare system. The data says otherwise.

Nassau County, NY, touted as a great success reducing disproportionality using so-called ‘blind removal’, has a rate of disproportionality even higher than Maryland’s. According to [Nassau County’s 2019 report](#), in a community where 13% of the residents are Black and 73% are white, 45% of the children entering care were Black and 16.48% are white. This compares with Maryland, where 30% of residents are Black and 58% are white; 54% of new foster care entries are Black and 29% are white. In short, despite using the ‘blind removal’ method, Nassau Co. has a disproportionality rate for Blacks of 32% compared with Maryland at 24%. While neither is anything to brag about, pursuing a strategy that results in more poor outcomes than our own is nonsensical.

In addition, House Bill 930 demonstrates a fundamental misunderstanding of the steps taken when the removal of a child from their home is considered. A family meeting is held with Agency representatives, family members and those of their choice who support them – spiritual leaders, relatives, friends, providers, and others – to help make this important child welfare decision. During these meetings, the safety concerns are articulated, the strengths of the families (protective factors) are identified, and a decision about removal is made with input from all parties. The final decision is made by the court.

Instead of engaging family members to make removal decisions, what HB 930 wrongly intimates is that this important decision is made by a group of professionals sitting around a table reviewing reports with redacted information. Given the failure of this approach in Nassau Co., there is no rationale for eliminating the family’s voice and substituting this awkward way of making removal decisions in Maryland.

We, too, are concerned about the troubling phenomenon of disproportionate representation of Black children in out of home care. Some of our members have decades of experience in public child welfare and have closely studied disproportionality. What we have learned is that disproportionality varies by age and factors on entry, and requires thoughtful study to understand and formulate successful strategies to address. HB 930 does neither.

We appreciate the bill’s intention, however naïve, to shield families in some way. Were HB 930 to be passed, its requirements would simply hamper good decision-making by limiting available information without offering any enhanced or greater protection for the children or their families.

We urge you to vote NO on HB 930.

Respectfully,

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