



Testimony of American Association of University Women of Maryland

to the

**Maryland General Assembly
House of Delegates Judiciary Committee**

in support of

**House Bill 748: Family Law – Child Custody and Visitation (Best Interest of the Child
When there is Child Abuse or Domestic Violence)**

February 18, 2021

Submitted by Roxann King, Vice President, Public Policy

The American Association of University Women of Maryland (AAUW Maryland) strongly supports 2021 HB 748. Founded in 1881, AAUW's approximately 170,000 members and 1,000 branches nationwide are leaders in gender equity research, advocacy, and philanthropy. In Maryland, we have over 4,000 members and supporters and 13 college and university partners. Our Maryland members are strong advocates for laws that promote the well-being of women and children.

Women should not be afraid to bring claims of abuse for fear that the very complaint, trying to protect their child, will be used against them in a custody proceeding. When there are allegations of child abuse or domestic violence, many victims are revictimized by the courts. Acceptance of the debunked Parental Alienation Syndrome and confusion with existing Family Law Article 9-101 lead judges to fail to make clear what best interests of the child they weighed in ruling on child custody. Codifying these standards and more clearly guiding judges will allow litigants to understand the proceedings and relevant factors. Being clear about the factors considered and the application of the relevant laws is essential to protecting women and children, keeping them from increased danger.

AAUW Maryland urges that you provide a favorable report of HB 748 – Family Law – Child Custody and Visitation.