

# COMMISSION ON CHILD CUSTODY DECISION-MAKING

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## SUMMARY

### **Harford County - PUBLIC HEARING #2**

November 7, 2013 ◦ 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

**Location:** Harford Community College  
Edgewood Hall - Room E132, James LaCalle Lecture Hall  
401 Thomas Run Road, Bel Air, Maryland 21015-1698

#### **Commissioners in Attendance:**

Honorable Cynthia Callahan, Chair  
Wayne Beckles  
Dorothy J. Lennig, Esq.  
David L. Levy, Esq.  
Delegate Susan K. McComas  
Dr. Carlton E. Munson  
Kathleen A. Nardella, Esq., LCSW-C  
Laure Anne Ruth  
Keith N. Schiszik, Esq.  
Vernon E. Wallace, Jr.  
Lauren Young, Esq.

#### **Department of Family Administration Staff:**

Connie Kratovil-Lavelle, Esq.  
Gerald Loiacono  
Adam Wheeler

#### **Interpreters:**

Susan Roza, ASL Interpreter  
Caroline Schutz, Spanish Interpreter

#### **Public Attendance:**

<u>Testify</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
yes	Boback, Brandon	Father
yes	Chick, John	N/A
yes	Czyzyk, Mark	Father/NPO
yes	Gannon, Chris	Father
yes	Hausner, Deena	House of Ruth
no	Hurff, Matt	Self

yes	Iannacone, Sharon	Family Court Services
no	Koda, Paul	Self
yes	Lang, Jennifer	Self
yes	Little, Craig	Attorney
no	Mosier, Lauren	Self
yes	Nicholson, Chris	Attorney
no	Pelz, Suzanne	Maryland Judiciary
no	Roza, Susan	
no	Rueed, A.	GFLS
no	Schaffer, Eric	Father
no	Tate, Gwendolyn	SARC
no	Wagner, Kim	OPD/panel
no	Wasanow, David	Fair-4-Justice
yes	Weir, Christopher	Father
no	Williams, Joe	Family Court Services

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Chair commenced the hearing at 6:20 p.m.

Testimony commenced at 6:25 p.m.

John Chick - Damascus, Maryland

- Believes Maryland should have a joint custody presumption.
- Claims 37 states have a presumption for joint custody, or language allowing for legal or physical joint custody.
- States that domestic violence research is outdated and should be updated. Says conflict is reduced under functioning shared parenting.

Sharon Iannacone - Harford County Circuit Court Family Services

- Notes that Court seeks a safe relationship with both parents.
- States that uniformity sometimes comes at the cost of clear and instructive orders for litigants.
- Believes that designation of judicial officers/parent coordinators can reduce conflict.
- Submitted written testimony.

Mike Cyzyk - Father/NPO

- States that fathers have an important role in the lives of children.
- Believes that shared parenting works.

Denna Hausner - House of Ruth

- States that presumption of joint custody increases likelihood of violence.
- Notes that decisions should be made by courts on an individual basis without presumption of outcome.
- Says that exceptions in presumption statutes aren't enough to prevent violence.

#### Brandon Boback - Father

- Believes that men are often wrongly accused of domestic violence or sexual abuse.
- Says there is too much weight given to the opinions in expert reports and evaluations.

#### Christopher Weir - Father

- Believes there should be a presumption towards joint custody.
- Says that men are often wrongly accused of seeking joint custody as a cost saving measure.

#### Eric Schaffer - Father

- Believes that psychologists involved in custody disputes operate with a dishonest agenda.
- States that men are wrongly accused of sexual abuse with no evidence.

#### Chris Nicholson - Family Law Attorney

- Makes Three Recommendations:
  1. There should be no presumption in custody cases, children should be put first.
  2. There should statutory factors to create predictable decisions.
  3. There should be an administrative structure that allows cases to be heard within 90 days within filing.

#### Jennifer Lang - Self

- States that punishment for violations of protective order should be more severe and enforced.
- Believes there should be classes for children going through divorce.
- Says Orders and statutes should have a glossary of terms to make them easier to understand.
- Notes that there should be provisions to prevent judge shopping - one family, one judge.

#### Craig Little - Family Law Attorney

- Notes that joint custody is not always the best option.

- States there should be no presumption of any other custody arrangement Says parents and the court should develop individualized solutions for children.
- Gives the example of his son, who had 50-50 custody and revealed at age 20 that he hated it.

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Chris Gannon - Father

- Believes mediation needs to be expanded and supported by the courts.
- Says there should be a way to challenge false allegations made by one parent against another.
- States that parental alienation syndrome should be acknowledged by the Maryland courts.
- Provides additional materials.

Hearing concluded at 7:50 p.m.