

COMMISSION ON CHILD CUSTODY DECISION-MAKING

SUMMARY

Eastern Shore - PUBLIC HEARING #4

November 21, 2013 ◦ 6:00 p.m. – 8:00 p.m.

Location: Chesapeake College - Wye Mills Campus, Room HEC110
1000 College Drive, Wye Mills, Maryland 21679

Commissioners in Attendance:

Honorable Cynthia Callahan, Chair
Renee Bronfein Ades, Esq.
Honorable Shannon E. Avery
Kathleen M. Dumais
Dorothy J. Lennig, Esq.
David L. Levy, Esq.
Carlton E. Munson, Ph.D., LCSW-C
Kathleen A. Nardella, JD, LCSW-C
Laure Anne Ruth
Keith N. Schiszik, Esq.
Vernon E. Wallace, Jr.
Lauren Young, Esq.

Department of Family Administration Staff:

Christine Feddersen
Connie Kratovil-Lavelle, Esq.
Gerald Loiacono
Adam Wheeler

Interpreters:

Jaime Ochoa - Interpreter, Spanish
Carrie Quigley - Interpreter, ASL

Public Attendance:

<u>Testify</u>	<u>Name</u>	<u>Organization</u>
Yes	ACP #13035,"Mich"	Self
No	Barton, Linda	
Yes	Bates, Aaron	Self, father
No	Baumann, Jen	Circuit Court
Yes	Brown, Dana	
Yes	Chick, John	Self
No	Cullen, Kate	Mediation Services of Frederick
Yes	DiJulio, Christopher	Dad
No	Jurrius, Cynthia	Mid-Shore Mediation
No	Koda, Paul	National Parents Organization
No	Kranitz, Martin	Mediation Services of Annapolis
No	Land, Susan	Attorney
No	Meta, Jean D.	Judiciary
No	Pittsinger, Katie	Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence
No	Sharp, Bryon	NPO - National Parents Org.
No	Wolpert, Rachel	Maryland Legal Aid

Chair commenced the hearing at 6:08 p.m.

Chair, Cynthia Callahan, made opening remarks on the nature of the Commission and its responsibilities. She discussed the rules for speaking before the Commission.

Testimony commenced at 6:10 p.m.

Dana Brown - Charles County

- States he believes there is a major bias against fathers in custody decisions
- Cites a recent study by the Women’s Law Center
- Alleges that the House of Ruth is wrong to oppose “shared” (50/50) parenting.
- Wants rebuttable presumption of joint (50/50) custody.

Christopher DiJulio – Father, Anne Arundel County

- Suggests domestic violence allegations made during the course of a custody dispute be heard in Circuit Court by the judge assigned to the custody case.
- Gives examples of multiple filings of protective order proceedings in his case.
- Wants police or Department of Social Services to investigate allegations of parental drug abuse within 14 days.

“Mich” [Alias], - Self, St. Mary’s County

- States several judges had to recuse because ex-husband retained their old firm.
- Alleges she had clear evidence of lying in custody proceedings by ex-husband.
- Moved to Maryland, lost full custody to father and received no visitation.
- Wants retired judges required to have continuing education and be tested for mental acuity.

John Chick – Litigant, Damascus, Maryland

- Cites 2010 article in Journal of Pediatrics and Child Health for evidence that children do better when raised by both parents.
- Alleges presumption of joint custody has an exception for domestic violence.
- Outlines three ways to avoid domestic violence:
 - Supervised exchange centers paid for by those who use the service;
 - Mandatory co-parenting classes;
 - Removing causes of parental conflict like bias against fathers;
 - Adopting shared custody which leads to lower parental conflict.
- Claims 37 other states have some type of shared parenting language.
- Notes California’s statutory language that it is the public policy of the state to ensure frequent and continuing contact between a child and both parents.

Aaron Bates – Self, father, Highland, Maryland

- Claims that rights and laws are ignored by courts and lawyers.
- Complains that no evaluation of the mother’s mental state or living situation was done after she disappeared with the child.
- Says ultimately he was awarded seven nights short of 50-50 parenting time.
- Alleges mother uses child support to pay for her own desires.
- Claims child support is 40% of his gross income which makes his business unprofitable.

6:41 p.m. - Honorable Cynthia Callahan, Chair, announced that the Commission would recess as there were no more speakers waiting. If no new speakers arrived before 7:30 p.m., the hearing would be adjourned.

7:30 p.m. - Hearing adjourned.