

This bill adds a rebuttable presumption when determining child custody arrangements that an award of equal or approximately equal parenting time to each parent is in the best interests of the child. Such presumption may be rebutted by a preponderance of the evidence for relevant factors as specified in the bill, or if the court finds the parents have reached an agreement on all issues related to custody or that a pattern of domestic violence has occurred. The General Assembly urges the court to enter a temporary parenting plan as soon as practicable in a manner that will best assure both parents participate in custody decisions and have frequent, continuing, and meaningful contact with their children.

The bill clarifies that the fact that a parent sends his or her child or children to a home school will not be the sole factor that a court considers in determining custody of such child or children. Additionally, current law requires a court considering child custody to consider and enter written findings of fact and conclusions of law on the child's wishes as to his or her custodian. This provision is modified to require that the court instead consider the child's unobstructed input, free of coercion and manipulation, as to his or her custodial arrangement.

This bill provides that the hearings to determine whether the suspension of a business, occupational, professional, recreational, or other license is appropriate when an individual is not in compliance with a child support order shall comply with due process and shall consider all relevant factors, including the individual's current and past ability to pay the support, his or her need for transportation, and his or her need for the license for continued employment.

The court or the Director of the Family Support Division within the Department of Social Services shall consider and issue written findings of fact and conclusions of law within 30 days of the hearing. If the court or the Director, after the hearing, determines that the individual has not made the required payments for good cause, then the court or Director shall not issue an order suspending the license or, if an order is in place, shall stay such order.