

generally for such jurisdiction and the procedure for its exercise; specifying the rights and duties of the several parties who may be engaged in any such proceedings and relating generally to the laws of this State concerning bastardy, fornication, paternity proceedings and illegitimacy.

SECTION 1. *Be it enacted by the General Assembly of Maryland, That Section 66 of Article 16 of the Annotated Code of Maryland (1957 Edition), title "Chancery," subtitle "Infants," be and it is hereby repealed and re-enacted with amendments; and new Sections 66A to 66P, inclusive, be and they are hereby added to said Article to follow immediately after said Section 66, and to be under the new subtitle "Paternity Proceedings," to read as follows:*

66.

(a) The several equity courts of this State shall have original jurisdiction in all cases relating to the custody, [or] guardianship, maintenance and support of legitimate and illegitimate children, and [may] on the bill or petition filed by the father, [or] mother, [or] relative, [or] next of kin, or next friend of any such child or children, or by the public welfare official of the county or the City of Baltimore where such child or children may be found, the equity court may direct who shall have the custody or guardianship of such child or children [.] and who shall be charged with his, her or their support and maintenance, pendente lite or permanently, and may, from time to time thereafter annul, vary or modify its decree or order in relation to such child or children, provided that nothing herein contained shall be construed to take away or impair the jurisdiction of the several courts in this State in cases relating to dependent or delinquent children.

(b) *A bill or petition filed pursuant to subsection (a) of this section relating to the custody, guardianship, maintenance, and support of any child or children may be filed in the county or City of Baltimore wherein the father or the putative father or the mother or the child or children reside or are found.*

(c) *In the case of an illegitimate child or children, proceedings on the bill or petition shall be had in accordance with the provisions of the subtitle "Paternity Proceedings" of this Article; and the equity courts of this State shall have the additional jurisdiction and power as provided in the subtitle.*

(d) *The fact that an illegitimate child or children was or were conceived or born outside the State of Maryland is not a bar to a complaint under this section and the subtitle "Paternity Proceedings" of this Article.*

(e) *Proceedings to establish paternity under the subtitle "Paternity Proceedings" and to charge the putative father of an illegitimate child or children with their support and maintenance shall be commenced during the pregnancy of the mother thereof or within two (2) years after the birth of such child or children; except that if the putative father of such child or children has acknowledged in writing the paternity of the child or children or has made payment or otherwise provided for the support and maintenance of the child or children, it is sufficient if the proceedings are commenced within*