

parent before a court may grant a decree of adoption without the consent of the child's natural parent under certain circumstances; providing for the application and construction of this Act; and generally relating to independent adoptions in which a natural parent withholds consent.

BY repealing and reenacting, with amendments,

Article - Family Law
Section 5-312
Annotated Code of Maryland
(1984 Volume and 1986 Supplement)

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND, That the Laws of Maryland read as follows:

Article - Family Law

5-312.

(a) (1) This section applies only to independent adoptions in which a natural parent AFFIRMATIVELY withholds consent BY FILING A NOTICE OF OBJECTION.

(2) This section does not permit a licensed or approved foster parent to petition a court for adoption of a child who was placed with the foster parent by a child placement agency unless the child placement agency consents.

(b) Without the consent of the child's natural parent, a court may grant a decree of adoption to a stepparent, relative, or other individual who has exercised physical care, custody, or control of a child for at least [1 year] 6 MONTHS, if by clear and convincing evidence the court finds that:

(1) it is in the best interest of the child to terminate the natural parent's rights as to the child;

(2) the child has been out of the custody of the natural parent for at least [3 years] 1 YEAR;

(3) the child has developed significant feelings toward and emotional ties with the petitioner; and

(4) the natural parent:

(i) has not maintained meaningful contact with the child during the time the petitioner has had custody despite the opportunity to do so;