

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

Article - Family Law

5-303.

(a) The General Assembly finds that the policies and procedures of this subtitle that concern adoption are socially necessary and desirable.

(b) The purposes of this subtitle are to:

(1) PROVIDE CHILDREN WITH STABLE HOMES THAT PROTECT THEIR SAFETY AND HEALTH;

(2) protect;

(1) children from:

(i) unnecessary separation from their natural parents; [and

(ii) (3) PERMIT adoption ONLY by individuals who are [unfit] FIT for the responsibility;

[(2)] (4) PROTECT natural parents from MAKING a hurried or ill-considered decision to give up a child; and

[(3)] (5) PROTECT adoptive parents:

(i) by providing them information about the child and the child's background; and

(ii) from a future disturbance of their relationship with the child by a natural parent.

5-313.

(a) A court may grant a decree of adoption or a decree of guardianship, without the consent of a natural parent otherwise required by §§ 5-311 and 5-317 of this subtitle, if the court finds by clear and convincing evidence that it is in the best interest of the child to terminate the natural parent's rights as to the child and that:

(1) the child is abandoned as provided in subsection (b) of this section;

(2) in a prior juvenile proceeding, the child has been adjudicated to be a child in need of assistance, a neglected child, an abused child, or a dependent child; or

(3) the following set of circumstances exists:

(i) the child has been continuously out of the custody of the natural parent and in the custody of a child placement agency for at least 1 year;

(ii) the conditions that led to the separation from the natural parent still exist or similar conditions of a potentially harmful nature still exist;