Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County
Case No. C-02-FM-15-000969

UNREPORTED*

IN THE APPELLATE COURT

OF MARYLAND

No. 2237

September Term, 2025

BRANDY DORSEY

v.

WALTER LIVRAMENTO, III

Tang,
Kehoe, S.,
Raker, Irma S.
(Senior Judge, Specially Assigned),

JJ.

Opinion by Tang, J.

Filed: May 20, 2026

*This is an unreported opinion. This opinion may not be cited as precedent within the rule of stare decisis. It may be cited for its persuasive value only if the citation conforms to Rule 1-104(a)(2)(B).

This appeal arises from a motion to modify custody filed by the appellant, Brandy Dorsey ("Mother"). Following a contested hearing, the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County found a material change in circumstances but declined to grant her sole legal and primary physical custody of the parties' minor child, as she requested. Instead, the court retained sole legal and primary physical custody with the appellee, Walter Livramento, III ("Father"). The court did modify Mother's visitation and other provisions, which she does not contest.

Mother's appeal focuses on the court's denial of sole legal and primary physical custody. She raises several issues in her informal brief, which we summarize below. For the reasons set forth herein, we affirm the judgment of the circuit court.

BACKGROUND

Mother and Father are the parents of a child born in 2015. They have been involved in ongoing custody litigation. We summarize the pertinent procedural history.

In 2017, the court awarded Father sole legal and primary physical custody of the child, while granting Mother visitation every other weekend. In September 2024, the parties entered a consent order with the goal of "work[ing] towards a joint legal and shared physical custody arrangement." Father continued to have sole legal and primary physical custody of the child. The parties agreed to meet in six months to review the legal and physical custody arrangement, either together or with a parenting coordinator, in an effort to meet the goal.

The consent order expanded Mother's alternating weekend visitation. It also directed the parties to adhere to the holiday schedule established in a prior order from September 2017. Under the 2017 order, all holiday exchanges were to occur at a local police station. Additionally, the parents were instructed to communicate civilly during exchanges. The consent order further required the parties to comply with ten "kids' rules of separated families," which include guidelines to prevent disparagement or conflict in front of the child.

Additionally, the consent order required the parties to communicate with each other about the child via text messages and notify each other of the child's medical appointments and any event which significantly affected the child's health, education, behavior, or general welfare.

Mother's Motion to Modify Custody

In December 2024, Mother filed a motion to modify the September 2024 consent order. In the motion, Mother alleged that since entering the consent order in September, the parties had "experienced dispute and disagreement regarding the exchanges of the minor child." She specified that Father had not complied with the order in the following ways:[1]

> [Father] continues non compliance with court orders which is not in the best interest of our minor child. [Father] Refuses to communicate in regard to our child. Denies to inform of pertinent information. [Father] continually denies access, Does not inform of appointments, Does not take to sports/events, Refuses to utilize [parenting coordinator], Refuses holiday access, Refuses to follow the 10 kids rules of separation. Refuses to consistently send our

[1] Mother initially filed a motion to modify custody with the assistance of counsel. After her original counsel withdrew, she filed a subsequent motion to modify on her own. She later retained new counsel to represent her.

> child to school creating struggles and decline. [Father] does not and has not ever had custody of our minor child and has no interest in such. Does not parent or care for [the child] in any regard and has continually failed to demonstrate such since [the child's birth].

Mother requested the court grant her "sole physical and legal custody" of the child and reduce Father's access to every other weekend. Father opposed the request, arguing that no material changes occurred—Mother had made the same claims in motions to modify since 2017.

The court scheduled a two-day hearing for October 9 and 10, 2025, with both parties represented by their respective counsel. The court heard testimony from Mother; Father; and Father's mother, the child's paternal grandmother, Monica Johnson ("Grandmother"). In addition, the court interviewed the child outside the parents' presence.

Father testified regarding his employment as a truck driver and his work schedule, explaining that due to his hours, the child stays with Grandmother during the school week and with Father on weekends.

The parties agreed that communication between them had broken down. Father did not cooperate with the parenting coordinator as required by the order, and disputes arose concerning the child's health—specifically his hair loss, medications, and the sharing of information about medical appointments. Each parent accused the other of withholding the child during their scheduled access times.

Custody exchanges had become contentious. Mother and Father both presented the court with videos of different exchanges occurring in November 2024, after the consent order went into effect, to demonstrate the acrimonious nature of these exchanges. Mother

introduced footage depicting an exchange involving Father that took place on November 15, 2024. Father introduced a video showing an exchange between Mother and Grandmother at the police station on Thanksgiving 2024.

During the child's interview, the child described his living arrangements: he stays at Grandmother's for one week, then at Father's home for the weekend, then back to Grandmother's for another week, and finally at Mother's home. He also testified that during exchanges, Father attempted to speak to Mother "about me, like if he's saying I need something or I need this medicine or something," but Mother "just [] ignores him" and does not allow him to have the medicine.

During closing arguments, Mother's attorney reiterated that the communication issues Mother and Father were experiencing constituted a material change in circumstances. Counsel addressed the *Sanders-Taylor* factors,[2] arguing that it was in the

[2] In *Montgomery County Department of Social Services v. Sanders*, this Court articulated factors for consideration by a court determining custody:

> The criteria for judicial determination includes, but is not limited to, 1) fitness of the parents, 2) character and reputation of the parties, 3) desire of the natural parents and agreements between the parties, 4) potentiality of maintaining natural family relations, 5) preference of the child, 6) material opportunities affecting the future life of the child, 7) age, health and sex of the child, 8) residences of parents and opportunity for visitation, 9) length of separation from the natural parents, and 10) prior voluntary abandonment or surrender[.]

38 Md. App. 406, 420 (1977) (internal citations omitted).

In *Taylor v. Taylor*, the Supreme Court of Maryland listed factors for courts to consider, including the capacity of parents to communicate and to reach shared decisions affecting the child's welfare, willingness of parents to share custody, fitness of parents,

child's best interests for Mother to be awarded custody. In contrast, Father's counsel contended that no material change in circumstances had occurred, asserting that Mother had made similar allegations against Father for years. Counsel asked the court to keep sole legal and primary physical custody with Father.

At the conclusion of the hearing, the court found that neither Mother nor Father complied with the pertinent orders. As to Father, the court found that he did not comply with the requirement that the parties were to review the custody arrangement after six months. The court found that Father "basically ignored [the requirement] because he didn't like it."

As to Mother, the court found Mother's demeanor in the videos to be the "worst" evidence. The court recounted what the videos of the exchanges depicted:

> [G]randmother comes to the police station. She says oh, he has some medicine or something, and I don't need to give that to you. And then, [Mother], for some reason, starts to have a fit about the fact that she talked about something that the child needed, rather than saying, oh, I understand, or say nothing at all. And for some reason, [Mother] thought that that was a positive thing for her.

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relationship established between the child and each parent, preference of the child, potential disruption of child's social and school life, geographic proximity of parental homes, demands of parental employment, age and number of children, sincerity of parents' request, financial status of the parents, impact on state or federal assistance, benefit to parents, and "all other circumstances that reasonably relate to the [custody] issue." 306 Md. 290, 304–11 (1986). The factors in *Sanders* and *Taylor* are colloquially known as the *Taylor-Sanders* (or the *Sanders-Taylor*) factors. *See*, *e.g.*, *Jose v. Jose*, 237 Md. App. 588, 600 (2018) (considering *Sanders-Taylor* factors together).

In May 2025, the General Assembly passed SB 548/HB 119, which codified the *Sanders-Taylor* factors, effective October 1, 2025. The bill was enacted as § 9-201 in the Family Law article of the Maryland Code and was in effect at the time of the merits hearing at issue in this appeal.

> Just like . . . the child exchange between [the parents], where [Mother] is hollering something out of the car. Then, she gets out. [Father's] talking to the child before the child's got to go, because I'm assuming [Mother's] hollering like a maniac. And then, she's thinking that this makes her look good. That was – those videos were the best evidence of how she behaves on a regular basis, and it's not acceptable.

The court remarked that the videos that Mother thought were "good evidence" made her look "bad" and, later in the oral ruling, indicated that Mother "can't control herself." The court further concluded it was "obvious" that the parents "can't get along" and "communicate on a regular basis."

The court summarized the child's testimony, noting that he stays with Grandmother during the week and spends access time with his parents. The court characterized the child's feelings about this arrangement as "fine."

The court found a material change in circumstances. In its decision, the court considered the parties' ability to communicate, the "desire of the natural parents," and various "school and social factors" relevant to the case. It modified the prior orders—the September 2024 consent order and the related September 2017 holiday visitation order. However, the court stated that these changes would not constitute "radical modifications."

The court ordered that primary physical and sole legal custody remain with Father. It modified certain provisions related to visitation. In addition, both parents were required to use a communication application instead of text messages to communicate about the child. The court also ordered the parties to record video of the exchanges. Furthermore, the court reiterated the requirement to engage a parenting coordinator.

The court memorialized the oral ruling in an order entered November 21, 2025. Mother moved for reconsideration regarding the court's custody decision, which the court denied. Thereafter, she filed this appeal.

We shall provide additional facts below as necessary.

ISSUES PRESENTED

Mother, now *pro se*, filed an informal brief. She presents numerous issues on appeal which she describes as follows: (1) Violation of the Custody Agreement; (2) Excessive School Absences and Exposure to Domestic Abuse; (3) Appellee's Alcohol Addiction and Non-Compliance with Court Orders; (4) Child's Residence and Custody Location; (5) Parental Communication and Scheduling Issues; (6) Injuries Throughout and Following the October 10, 2025 Ruling; (7) Appellee's Abandonment and Unavailability; (8) Inability to Manage Visitation and Schedules; (9) In Camera Interview Defects; (10) Appellee's Mother Falsely Claiming to Be The Child's Guardian; (11) The Judge Erred in Relying on Outdated Evidence by Failing to Consider Post-2024 Developments; (12) Violation of Due Process and Right to Be Heard in Clarifying Evidence; (13) Violation of the Maryland Rules of Procedure and Evidence Due to the Introduction of Irrelevant and Late Evidence; (14) Violation of Maryland Rules Due to Introduction of Irrelevant and Undisclosed Evidence; (15) Violation of Maryland Law and Procedural Rules Due to Introduction of Expunged Records and Complaints; (16) Misinterpretation of Evidence and Violation of

Procedural Fairness; (17) Monica's Harmful Actions and Misdiagnosis of Alopecia; (18) Best Interest of the Child Analysis.[3]

PRINCIPLES OF APPELLATE REVIEW

Several issues and arguments raised by Mother are not properly before us. Before proceeding to the discussion and to avoid repetition, we summarize the pertinent principles of appellate review.

Briefing

Mother filed an "Informal Brief" under this Court's December 19, 2022 Administrative Order permitting informal briefing in family law cases where the appellant is a self-represented litigant. *See* Md. Rule 8-502(a)(9); Appellate Court Administrative Order (Dec. 19, 2022). Although Rule 8-502(a)(9) dispenses with the technical requirements of a formal brief under Rule 8-504, the informal brief still

> [M]ust identify issues that explain *why the trial court erred or made a mistake* in deciding the case and why the decision should be reversed or modified. The issues presented in the informal brief should be stated concisely *with a description of the facts surrounding the issue and an argument supporting the resolution of the issue.*

Guidelines for Informal Briefs ("Guidelines") (b)(2) (emphasis added).[4]

[3] Mother's brief also designates the following as issues: (19) Standard of Review; (20) Conclusion; (21) Record Supports Custody Award to Appellant; (22) Relief Requested. However, "Issues" 19–21 are a continuation of her Issue (18) Best Interest of the Child Analysis. "Issue" 22 is the relief she seeks from all the issues she presents on appeal.

[4] The Administrative Order and the Guidelines for Informal Briefs can be found on the Appellate Court's website. *See Administrative Order*, https://www.courts.state.md.us/sites/default/files/import/cosappeals/pdfs/adminorderinfor

As this Court has consistently stated, "[w]e cannot be expected to delve through the record to unearth factual support favorable to [an] appellant." *Van Meter v. State*, 30 Md. App. 406, 408 (1976). Nor is it our "responsibility to attempt to fashion coherent legal theories to support [an] appellant's sweeping claims." *Elecs. Store, Inc. v. Cellco P'ship*, 127 Md. App. 385, 405 (1999). "[I]f a point germane to the appeal is not adequately raised in a party's brief, the court may, and ordinarily should, decline to address it." *DiPino v. Davis*, 354 Md. 18, 56 (1999); *Klauenberg v. State*, 355 Md. 528, 552 (1999) ("[A]rguments not presented in a brief *or not presented with particularity* will not be considered on appeal." (emphasis added)).

Preservation

Under Maryland Rule 8-131(a), we will ordinarily not decide an issue unless it plainly appears by the record to have been raised in or decided by the trial court. The purpose of this rule is to "require counsel to bring the position of his client to the attention of the lower court at the trial so that the trial court can pass upon, and possibly correct any errors in the proceedings." *Chimes v. Michael*, 131 Md. App. 271, 288 (2000) (citation omitted). "The rule is effectively a form of estoppel—it curbs appeals that are inconsistent with the parties' positions at trial." *Id.*; *accord Halloran v. Montgomery Cnty. Dep't of Pub. Works*, 185 Md. App. 171, 202 (2009) ("[U]nless a [party] makes timely objections in the

malbriefs.pdf, [https://perma.cc/7Y28-CUY5]); *Guidelines for Informal Briefs*, App. Ct. Md., https://www.courts.state.md.us/sites/default/files/import/cosappeals/pdfs/guidelinesinformalbriefs.pdf, [https://perma.cc/NT67-7249] (last visited May 14, 2026).

lower court or makes his feelings known to that court, he will be considered to have waived them and he can not now raise such objections on appeal." (citation omitted)); *see, e.g.*, *Chimes*, 131 Md. App. at 288 (holding the appellant "cannot argue now that the child support guidelines apply, because he did not preserve that issue"); *In re Tyrek S.*, 118 Md. App. 270, 277 (1997) (determining the issue of appellant's inability to pay restitution was not preserved for review because it was not raised in appellant's exceptions to magistrate's recommendation). If the argument is not preserved, we need not address it. *See, e.g.*, *In re K.L.*, 252 Md. App. 148, 188 n.36 (2021) (noting that where a party failed to argue the application of a specific standard before the magistrate and juvenile court, such argument was not preserved and would ordinarily not be addressed).

Citations to Authorities

A party may, but is not required to, cite authorities in the informal brief. *See* Guidelines, *supra*, at (b)(7). However, if one does, the party should ensure that the authorities do, in fact, exist and stand for the proposition stated. Submission of nonexistent or inaccurate legal authority is improper and wastes judicial resources.

Mother's brief contains numerous citations to cases and other legal authorities. We suspect that Mother may have used generative artificial intelligence ("AI") to assist in drafting her brief, as several cited authorities are fictitious, and others do not support the stated proposition.[5] We identify these problematic citations in footnotes as relevant.

[5] In addition to her brief, Mother filed several motions with this Court in this case. In various motions, Mother cited cases that do not exist.

In *Mezu v. Mezu*, 267 Md. App. 354 (2025), we highlighted the potential dangers of using AI to conduct legal research or generate filings, including the risk of "hallucinated" citations. *Id.* at 367–68. Moreover, "[t]he citation of fake cases in a brief or other pleading filed with a court implicates multiple Maryland Rules." *Id.* at 368. Attorneys who submit filings containing fake citations may be referred to the Attorney Grievance Commission depending on the nature and severity of the misconduct. *See id.* at 374.

Although there is no parallel disciplinary action for *pro se* litigants, Maryland Rule 1-311(c) authorizes us to strike the offending filing. Where, as here, the filing is an appellant's principal brief, striking it could result in dismissal under Maryland Rule 8-602(c)(5) for failure to file a brief. *See* Md. Rule 1-311(c) ("[T]he action may proceed as though the [stricken] pleading or paper had not been filed."); Md. Rule 8-602(c)(5) (court may dismiss appeal where brief is not timely filed by appellant).

We exercise our discretion to decline striking Mother's informal brief in its entirety. As explained below, several issues are not properly before us, so we need not identify or address the problematic citations because we do not reach the merits of these issues. *See infra*, Parts I–III. However, this does not excuse the impropriety of such conduct. To the extent an issue is properly before us, we will strike from the brief any cases that are fictitious and any authorities that clearly do not support the propositions for which they are cited. *See infra*, Part IV, notes 8–17. Mother is warned and put on notice that continued citation of fabricated cases or misrepresented legal authorities may result in sanctions, including the striking of future filings in their entirety.

With these principles in mind, we address the issues to the extent they are properly before us.

DISCUSSION

We first address the issues that are not properly before us. We have grouped them in the following parts: (I) Unpreserved Issues, (II) Inadequately Briefed Issues, and (III) Post-Hearing Issues. We address the merits of the remaining issues, which we group into Part (IV) Best Interest Analysis.

I.

UNPRESERVED ISSUES

Issue 4

Under Issue 4 (Monica's Harmful Actions and Misdiagnosis of Alopecia), Mother raises a sub-argument claiming that the court "erred in accepting" the child's alopecia diagnosis due to the absence of reliable medical evidence. She asserts that the diagnosing doctor had his medical license revoked. Citing Maryland Rule 5-702, Mother contends that the doctor's license revocation, combined with the "lack of supporting tests," renders the diagnosis unreliable and therefore inadmissible.

The argument is not preserved. Mother did not object to any testimony regarding the child's diagnosis under Rule 5-702 during the hearing, as she now does on appeal.[6] In

[6] Additionally, we note that the child's alopecia diagnosis was admitted during the hearing without objection. Mother testified that the child was taken to the hospital at some point and diagnosed with alopecia. Additionally, Mother, through counsel, presented, and the court admitted, the child's medical records which contained the child's alopecia diagnosis.

any event, any error in admitting such evidence is harmless, because the court did not rely on this evidence in its custody decision. *See McKay v. Paulson*, 211 Md. 90, 100 (1956) (applying the "well established rule" that wrongful admission of harmless testimony is not reversible error); *Beahm v. Shortall*, 279 Md. 321, 330 (1977) (explaining the Court's policy "not to reverse for harmless error"). At one point during testimony about the child's diagnosis, the court remarked that it had:

> [N]o idea what he has because the father didn't take the child back to the doctor. The child's hair fell out the last time. So I don't know that. Neither does the father. Everybody's guessing because the child hasn't been back to the doctor since the child's hair fell out.

The court recognized that the "child [had] a history," but reiterated that it had "no idea what the child's diagnosis is because . . . the child hasn't gone back to the doctor."

Issue 9

Under Issue 9 (In Camera Interview Defects), Mother argues that the court erred by "permitting the minor child's statements to be used in the proceedings without properly addressing the issue of privilege." In addition, "[Father's] attorney's conduct in arranging for the [child's] therapist to drive the child to court, with the hidden agenda of instilling fear in the child, is highly problematic" because the attorney "effectively coerced and intimidated the minor." She argues that the "court should have rejected the child's statements with the therapist[] present due to the lack of a proper waiver of privilege and the manipulation of the interview process and presence of a therapist in which [the child] already doesn't trust[.]"

After the first day of the hearing, there was a discussion about the court interviewing the child the next day. The court expressed its intention to interview the child outside the parents' presence, to which Mother's counsel agreed. The court further expressed its preference for conducting the child's interview first thing in the morning and for arranging for the child to "come with somebody and leave with somebody" so the child does not need to be in court longer than necessary. Mother's counsel responded, "Yeah, I agree with you."

The following day, Father's counsel informed the court that the child's therapist, acting as a neutral party, had brought the child to court. The court then asked the parties whether they wished for the therapist to be present in the courtroom during the interview. The court had previously stated that it would not question the therapist, so patient-therapist privilege was not implicated.

Mother's counsel expressed that "it would be better just" for the judge to speak with the child, which was Mother's "preference," so that the child "completely speaks freely." However, her counsel indicated that the therapist's presence was "okay." Father did not object to the therapist's presence in the courtroom. Based on these responses, the court stated that it would have the therapist "sit somewhere in the courtroom away from [the child]," rather than "next to him." Neither side objected to this approach.

The court conducted its interview with the child. After, the parties and their attorneys returned to the courtroom. Mother's counsel addressed the court about it interviewing the child with the therapist present:

> [MOTHER'S COUNSEL]: My client has asked, and I don't disagree, that we were heard more robustly in terms of her objection to the presence of the

> therapist speaking with Your Honor being -- while the minor child spoke with the therapist present while speaking with Your Honor.
>
> THE COURT: Okay.
>
> [MOTHER'S COUNSEL]: My client is very concerned that . . . just given the nature of the custody schedule, the fact that the therapist does therapy within the home of [Grandmother], and the privilege was not waived. So frankly, I'm not sure she should have been here, but I'm not -- I wouldn't have any case law to support that at this moment -- that the minor child really should have spoken with you alone, without fear of anyone overhearing him. And we are asking that the [c]ourt consider asking to speak with the child alone and without the presence of the therapist –
>
> THE COURT: I've already spoken with him, so anything he says now is going to be tainted, number one. Number two, I've spoken with him, and in my judgment, he was completely candid. He wasn't bothered by the therapist. He didn't even look at the therapist. They're accused when . . . children [are] trying to seek answers from someone, that was not the case in this particular matter. He wasn't even bothered by the therapist being here, nor was he -- nor in my opinion, was he influenced by the therapist.
>
> [MOTHER'S COUNSEL]: I understand, Your Honor. My client –
>
> THE COURT: Your [c]ourt notes your objection.
>
> [MOTHER'S COUNSEL]: I appreciate you allowing me to make the record, Your Honor.

Mother's issue regarding the "interview defects" was not preserved. First, Mother did not object to the therapist transporting the child to court for the interview. Second, Mother did not object in a timely manner to the therapist being in the courtroom during the interview. *See* Md. Rule 2-517(a) ("An objection to the admission of evidence shall be made at the time the evidence is offered or as soon thereafter as the grounds for objection become apparent. Otherwise, the objection is waived . . . ."). Before the child was interviewed, Mother, through counsel, merely expressed her "preference" that the therapist not be present, but counsel indicated that it was "okay." "[U]nless a [party] makes timely

objections in the lower court or makes his feelings known to that court, [s]he will be considered to have waived them and [s]he can not now raise such objections on appeal." *Caviness v. State*, 244 Md. 575, 578 (1966); *see also Halloran*, 185 Md. App.at 201 (explaining that Md. Rule 8-131(a) arises from the principle that "[w]hen a party has the option either to object or not to object, his failure to exercise the option while it is still within the power of the trial court to correct the error is regarded as a waiver of it estopping him from obtaining a review of the point or question on appeal" (citation omitted)).

Issues 12 & 16

Under Issue 12 (Violation of Due Process and Right to Be Heard in Clarifying Evidence Facts), Mother argues the "judge's refusal to let [her] clarify the video violated several principles of due process," such as the "right to be heard and present [her] full defense," the ability to present the presentation of relevant evidence, and her "right to defend [her]self in court." She explains, "During the court proceeding, [she] attempted to clarify a video where [her] actions were potentially misinterpreted," "[t]he judge refused to allow [her] to explain the video, even when it was crucial to [her] defense," and "[t]his refusal effectively prevented [her] from presenting an important clarification or defense, directly impacting the fairness of the proceeding."

Mother presents an overlapping argument under Issue 16 (Misinterpretation of Evidence and Violation of Procedural Fairness). She argues that "[t]he judge's failure to interpret the video accurately, create[d] a false narrative, and disregard[ing] the context of my actions violated several Maryland rules" and her "Due Process . . . right to a fair trial."

Mother does not identify the point during the hearing in which the court purportedly refused to allow her to explain the video. We assume it was during the court's oral ruling when it remarked that the video presented Mother in a bad light. There, the court stated:

> I have no idea why [Mother] thought that [the video] was good evidence on her behalf. I'm sure your lawyer probably told you that, I – I'm not trying to show the judge this. This is bad. Evidence that you present is supposed to show you in your best light, not your worst light. So my question is, is that the best you could behave when you're not in court? Because that's the best evidence you presented regarding your behavior. That's the best you can do when you're not here. You thought it was good.

At that point, Mother interrupted the court's oral ruling:

> [MOTHER]: May I -- may I speak, Your Honor?
>
> THE COURT: Ma'am, don't say anything. You thought –
>
> [MOTHER]: That's not true.
>
> THE COURT: I'm telling you how bad it looked because all I saw in both those videos was the mother -- [Grandmother] trying to tell you that the child needed certain things, and you said, I don't say anything, don't say anything.

Neither Mother nor her counsel objected on the grounds now raised on appeal. Accordingly, these issues are not preserved for review. *See* Md. Rule 8-131(a).

II.

INADEQUATELY BRIEFED ISSUES

Under Issues 13 (Violation of Maryland Rules of Procedure and Evidence Due to the Introduction of Irrelevant and Late Evidence) and 14 (Violation of Maryland Rules Due to Introduction of Irrelevant and Undisclosed Evidence), Mother argues that the court admitted evidence that was irrelevant and not disclosed in discovery. Likewise, under Issue 15 (Violation of Maryland Law and Procedural Rules Due to Introduction of Expunged

Records and Complaints), Mother argues that evidence of her "expunged record" and "complaints" should have been excluded, because they were irrelevant, prejudicial, and were "introduced after the designated timeframe for evidence."

As we explained above, Subsection (b)(2) of the Guidelines for Informal Briefs states that the appellant must identify issues "that explain why the trial court erred or made a mistake in deciding the case" and provide the Court "a description of the facts surrounding the issue and an argument supporting the resolution of the issue." Mother does not specifically identify which testimony or other evidence was improperly admitted. As we explained, "[w]e cannot be expected to delve through the record to unearth factual support favorable to [an] appellant." *Van Meter*, 30 Md. App. at 408. Nor is it our "responsibility to attempt to fashion coherent legal theories to support [an] appellant's sweeping claims." *Elecs. Store, Inc.*, 127 Md. App. at 405. Accordingly, we decline to address these issues.[7]

[7] Regarding Issue 15, if Mother is referring to an offense of identity fraud under $1,000, she may be confusing an "expunged record" with probation before judgment. During Father's testimony, over objection, he stated that he had learned Mother used his Social Security number to apply for credit cards, which led to Mother pleading guilty to identity theft. The court clarified that it admitted this testimony solely to explain why Father did not share his home address with Mother and then instructed Father's counsel to "move on" to another topic.

Similarly, during Mother's testimony, Father's counsel asked if she had pled guilty to the offense, prompting an objection from Mother's counsel. When Mother testified that she received probation before judgment, the court indicated "that's a guilty plea" and then directed Father's counsel to "move on." The court clearly did not rely on Mother's guilty plea in its custody decision, and any error in admitting this evidence was harmless. *McKay*, 211 Md. at 100 (applying the rule that wrongful admission of harmless testimony is not reversible error); *Beahm*, 279 Md. at 330 (explaining the Court's policy "not to reverse for harmless error").

III.

POST-HEARING ISSUES

Under Issue 6 (Injuries Throughout and Following the October 10, 2025 Ruling), Mother argues that the court did not address injuries sustained by the child while in Grandmother's care, citing events that occurred after the hearing. Mother also discusses post-hearing issues involving Grandmother's care under Issue 4 (Child's Residence and Custody Location) to argue that the court erred in not granting custody to her. She explains that the child is unsafe under Grandmother's supervision. She cites an incident of alleged neglect by Grandmother that occurred after the court's oral ruling.

Issues arising after the October 2025 merits hearing were not before the court when it issued the ruling that is the subject of this appeal. These post-hearing issues are best addressed by filing a petition or motion with the circuit court and are not properly brought before us in this appeal.

IV.

Best Interest Analysis

Under Issue 18 (Best Interest of the Child Analysis), Mother argues that the court overlooked the best interests of the child by denying her request for sole legal and primary physical custody of the child. She contends that the court did not properly address the following issues: violations of the 2024 consent order (Issue 1);[8] excessive school absences

[8] We strike the portion of Mother's Issue 1 that states that "a parent's failure to comply with a custody agreement can justify a modification," because the case she cites,

and exposure to domestic violence (Issue 2);[9] Father's alleged alcohol addiction and non-compliance with court orders (Issue 3);[10] the fact that the child was residing with Grandmother (Issue 4);[11] parental communication and scheduling issues (Issue 5);[12] Father's abandonment of the child and unavailability (Issue 7);[13] Father's inability to

Perry v. Perry, 94 Md. App. 735, 620 A.2d 953 (1993), does not exist. The citation to the Maryland Reporter is *In re Jason W.*, 94 Md. App. 731, 619 A.2d 163 (1993), a case about a juvenile court's authority to order restitution. The citation to the Atlantic Reporter is *Board of License Commissioners of Carroll County v. Pizza Hut of Maryland, Inc.*, 95 Md. App. 291, 620 A.2d 953 (1993), a case about a liquor store license.

[9] We strike the portion of Mother's Issue 2 that states "custody arrangements must prioritize the safety and well-being of the child," because the case she cites, *Stein v. Stein*, 297 Md. 113, 464 A.2d 1066 (1983), does not exist. The citation to the Maryland Reporter is *Hearst Corp. v. Hughes*, 297 Md. 112, 466 A.2d 486 (1983), a defamation case. The citation to the Atlantic Reporter is *Grimes v. State*, 297 Md. 1, 464 A.2d 1065, 1066 (1983), a criminal case about a victim's testimony relative to criminal agency, given subsequent to hypnosis.

[10] We strike the portion of Mother's Issue 3 that states "custody decisions must consider a parent's ability to provide a safe and stable environment," because this assertion cites to the non-existent case, *Stein*, 297 Md. 113. *See supra* note 9.

[11] We strike the portion of Mother's Issue 4 that states "custody arrangements must prioritize the stability and well-being of the child," because this assertion cites to the non-existent case, *Stein*, 297 Md. 113. *See supra* note 9.

[12] We strike the portion of Mother's Issue 5 that states "effective communication and cooperation between parents are essential to the child's well-being," because the case she cites for support, *Baker v. Baker*, 55 Md. App. 507, 462 A.2d 86 (1983), does not exist. The citation to the Maryland Reporter is *Norwood v. State*, 55 Md. App. 503, 462 A.2d 93 (1983), affirming rape convictions. The citation to the Atlantic Reporter is *Gerald v. State*, 55 Md. App. 483, 462 A.2d 85, 86 (1983), a criminal case about an illegal sentence.

[13] We strike the portion of Mother's Issue 7 stating "that custody decisions must prioritize the child's best interests," because the case on which she relies, *Stein*, 297 Md. 113, does not exist. *See supra* note 9.

manage visitation and schedules (Issue 8);[14] Grandmother claiming to be the child's guardian (Issue 10);[15] and the child's alopecia diagnosis, which Mother claims is improper (Issue 17).[16]

Under Issue 11 (The Judge Erred in Relying on Outdated Evidence by Failing to Consider Post-2024 Developments), Mother contends that the court's reliance on evidence

[14] We strike the portion of Mother's Issue 8 stating "a parent's ability to manage the child's schedule and responsibilities is crucial to ensuring stability and emotional well-being." The assertion cites to the non-existent case, *Baker*, 55 Md. App. 507. *See supra* note 12.

[15] We strike the portions of Mother's Issue 10 as it pertains to her argument that "misrepresenting oneself as a child's guardian or custodial parent without legal authority is a serious offense, carrying potential legal consequences," because:

- Maryland Family Law Article ("FL") § 5-203, relied on by Mother, does not state that "guardianship or custodial relationship must be legally established, and any false representation of such a relationship undermines the child's safety and welfare."
- *Kaczorowski v. City of Baltimore*, 309 Md. 505, 525 A.2d 628 (1987), an action challenging the continued existence of the Baltimore Development Agency, does not stand for the proposition that "misrepresentation" about one's status as a child's guardian "can lead to consequences that directly affect the child's well-being and safety."

[16] We strike the portions of Mother's Issue 17 as it pertains to her argument and sub-arguments alleging that the child was misdiagnosed with alopecia and explaining Grandmother's "manipulative" behavior because:

- FL § 9-101, relied on by Mother, relates to abuse or neglect by a "party." Grandmother was not a party to the proceeding.
- *Jones v. State*, 390 Md. 118 (2005), cited by Mother, does not exist. The case found at the principal citation is *Motor Vehicle Administration v. Weller*, 390 Md. 115 (2005), the review of an administrative hearing involving suspension of a driver's license.

that pre-dated the September 2024 consent order undermined its ability to determine the child's "true needs."[17]

Once the circuit court enters a child custody order, it may modify that order if it "determines that there has been a material change in circumstances since the issuance of the order that relates to the needs of the child or the ability of the parents to meet those needs and that modifying the order is in the best interest of the child." FL § 9-202(a) (2025 Cum. Supp.). As such, the statute directs a two-step analysis on a motion to modify custody, whether on a permanent or temporary basis. *Wagner v. Wagner*, 109 Md. App. 1, 28 (1996) (applying two-step analysis when reviewing temporary custody order); *see also McCready v. McCready*, 323 Md. 476, 480–81 (1991) (reviewing physical custody order under analysis).

First, as a threshold question, the court must determine if a material change in circumstances has occurred since the issuance of the custody order to be modified. *Wagner*, 109 Md. App. at 28; *see McCready*, 323 Md. at 482. Second, "[i]f a material change of

[17] We strike the portions of Mother's Issue 11 as it pertains to her argument that the court relied on stale evidence that Father presented because of the following citation irregularities:

- FL § 9-101 does not state that custody decisions "can only be determined with up-to-date evidence."
- *Shurupoff v. Shurupoff*, 307 Md. 113 (1986), does not exist. The case found at the principal citation is *Ford v. Ford*, 307 Md. 105, 113 (1986), holding that the "slayer rule" did not apply to a beneficiary who murdered her mother because she was insane at the time of the crime.
- *Tucker v. Tucker*, 339 Md. 284 (1995), does not exist. The case found at the principal citation is *Hill v. State*, 339 Md. 275, 284 (1995), a cocaine distribution case.

circumstance is found to exist, . . . the court, in resolving the custody issue, considers the best interest of the child as if it were an original custody proceeding." *Wagner*, 109 Md. App. at 28. In other words, the court must decide whether a modification of custody is in the child's best interest based on the changed circumstances, and the court must do so by considering the FL § 9-201(a) factors on the record or in a written opinion. *See* FL §§ 9-201(b), 9-202(a) (2025 Cum. Supp.). Courts have wide discretion in making decisions about the best interests of children. *Kadish v. Kadish*, 254 Md. App. 467, 504–05 (2022) (citing *Azizova v. Suleymanov*, 243 Md. App. 340, 345 (2019)).

The party seeking a change in custody bears the burden of demonstrating both the existence of a sufficient change in circumstances to justify that change and that a change in custody would be in the best interest of the child. *Wagner*, 109 Md. App. at 30–31; *Shunk v. Walker*, 87 Md. App. 389, 397–98 (1991) (explaining that "[t]he burden . . . is clearly on the party 'who affirmatively seeks action by the [court]'" to "establish that the modification is necessary to safeguard the welfare of the child" (citation omitted)).

Mother does not seriously dispute the court's determination of the threshold issue—that a material change in circumstances occurred since the entry of the September 2024 order. She also does not argue that the court failed to consider the best interest factors. Rather, Mother challenges the court's purported failure to "address" or articulate certain best interest factors in its ruling, and she disputes the court's weighing of the evidence in determining the custodial arrangement that best serves the child's interests.

Appellate review is not a forum for a disappointed parent to relitigate the weight of the evidence or dispute the credibility of witnesses, because the circuit court "sees the witnesses and the parties, hears the testimony, and . . . is in a far better position than is an appellate court, which has only a cold record before it, to weigh the evidence and determine what disposition will best promote the welfare of the minor child." *Reichert v. Hornbeck*, 210 Md. App. 282, 304 (2013) (citation omitted). As long as there is evidence to support the factual findings and no abuse of discretion, we will affirm that court's determinations regarding a material change and best interests. *Gizzo v. Gerstman*, 245 Md. App. 168, 203 (2020).

The record reflects that the court considered the pertinent factors based on the evidence presented and reached a discretionary conclusion. The court found that the parties were unable to communicate with one another regarding the child's welfare. In determining whether a particular custody arrangement is appropriate, the parties' capacity to communicate and reach shared decisions regarding the children's welfare is paramount. *Taylor v. Taylor*, 306 Md. 290, 303 (1986). Contrary to Mother's assertion otherwise, the court relied on evidence developed after the September 2024 order was entered. The court was persuaded, particularly by the videos taken after the September 2024 order, that Mother's behavior during exchanges was unacceptable. The court found that she did not listen when the child's medication was discussed during exchanges and was unable to control herself. Additionally, based on the child's interview, the court indicated that the

current physical custody arrangement was "fine." We find no abuse of discretion in the court's decision to deny Mother sole legal and primary physical custody.

Moreover, "where the trial court must issue a statement explaining the reasons for its decision, the court need not articulate every step of the judicial thought process in order to show that it has conducted the appropriate analysis." *Gizzo*, 245 Md. App. at 195–96. "Because trial judges are presumed to know the law, not every step in their thought process needs to be explicitly spelled out." *Zorich v. Zorich*, 63 Md. App. 710, 717 (1985) (internal citation omitted). A trial court is not required "to articulate every fact upon which [it] relies," as long as it sufficiently considers the relevant issues. *Cousin v. Cousin*, 97 Md. App. 506, 518 (1993); *see also Flanagan v. Flanagan*, 181 Md. App. 492, 533 (2008) ("Under discretionary review, a trial judge's failure to state each and every consideration or factor does not, without demonstration of some improper consideration, constitute an abuse of discretion, so long as the record supports a reasonable conclusion that appropriate factors were taken into account in the exercise of discretion." (citation modified)); *see, e.g.*, *Malin v. Mininberg*, 153 Md. App. 358, 429 (2003) (explaining that, "[a]lthough consideration of the [statutory] factors [regarding a monetary divorce award] is mandatory, the trial court need not go through a detailed check list of the statutory factors" "because a judge is presumed to know the law" (citation modified)). The record indicates that the court was aware of the best interest factors and sufficiently considered the relevant ones in deciding custody. "[T]he fact that the court did not catalog each factor and all the evidence which related to each factor does not require reversal." *Aventis Pasteur, Inc. v. Skevolifax*,

396 Md. 405, 426 (2007) (citation omitted). For the reasons stated, we affirm the court's decision to deny Mother's request for sole legal and primary physical custody of the child.

JUDGMENT OF THE CIRCUIT COURT FOR ANNE ARUNDEL COUNTY AFFIRMED. COSTS TO BE PAID BY THE APPELLANT.