

NON-PRECEDENTIAL DECISION - SEE SUPERIOR COURT O.P. 65.37

IN RE OF: A.R.F., A MINOR	:	IN THE SUPERIOR COURT OF
	:	PENNSYLVANIA
	:	
APPEAL OF: J.P.B., MOTHER	:	
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	:	
	:	
	:	
	:	No. 1599 EDA 2026

Appeal from the Decree Entered May 8, 2026
In the Court of Common Pleas of Monroe County Orphans' Court at
No(s): 2025-00047

BEFORE: McLAUGHLIN, J., KING, J., and BECK, J.

MEMORANDUM BY BECK, J.:

FILED SEPTEMBER 28, 2026

J.P.B. ("Mother") appeals from the decree entered by the Monroe County Court of Common Pleas ("orphans' court") terminating her parental rights to A.R.F. ("Child"), born March 2012, pursuant to 23 Pa.C.S. § 2511(a)(1) and (b). Because we conclude that the orphans' court did not abuse its discretion in terminating Mother's parental rights, we affirm.

This appeal arises from petitions filed by Child's father and his wife for the involuntary termination of Mother's parental rights and for stepparent adoption. The orphans' court held hearings on the petitions on February 20, April 6, and May 4, 2026. Following the hearings, the orphans' court made the following findings of fact:

1. The minor child^[1] subject to the petitions ... is currently 14 years old. Child signed a consent to adoption, filed of record with the petitions.
2. The father of Child is [J.F.] ("Father") [who resides in] Stroudsburg, PA[.]
3. [Mother resides in] Bethlehem, PA[.]
4. [K.F.] ("Stepmother") is married to [Father] and she seeks to adopt Child. Consents of Stepmother and Father were filed with the petitions.
5. Mother and Father were in a relationship until 2015. At that time, the parties separated and the parties shared custody as they could agree. The parties continued to reside separately in Northampton County, PA.
6. Sometime in 2017, Mother moved to Williamsport, PA, and Father filed for custody in Northampton County, PA. Father received primary custody subject to Mother's periods of partial custody every other weekend, split summers, and as the parties could agree.
7. At some point in 2020, Mother moved back to Bethlehem, PA and into the residence where she and Father previously resided, which was Father's grandfather's house. Father has since moved to his current residence with Stepmother and Child.
8. Mother continues to reside at that residence in Bethlehem with her other two (2) children, ... and Father's grandfather (the "paternal great-grandfather" to Child).
9. Father is not the father of Mother's other two (2) children.
10. In or about 2020, Child made allegations that paternal great-grandfather had acted inappropriately toward her when she visited Mother for periods of Mother's custody. All allegations

¹ The orphans' court referred to Child as "minor child" throughout its opinion. For purposes of simplicity and consistency, we will refer to her only as "Child" throughout this decision.

were investigated by Children and Youth Services [("CYS")] and were unfounded. There were no criminal charges filed either.

11. At first, Father stopped all visits at Mother's home pending the CYS investigation, as well as the COVID pandemic.

12. Father eventually allowed visits again, but Child was reluctant to visit Mother at her residence.

13. Mother filed for[] custody modification in Northampton County, PA in September 2020, but the parties agreed to continue under the same custody schedule.

14. The parties continued to work together from 2020-2022 to try and continue visits between Mother and Child despite Child's reluctance to engage with Mother.

15. Child felt Mother was yelling at her, she was uncomfortable with paternal great-grandfather in the home, and other reasons that were causing a rift between her and Mother.

16. Child was also angry at Mother because she did not feel Mother believed her or advocated for her regarding the allegations about paternal great-grandfather.

17. As a result of the issues Child was having with Mother, the parties started counselling for Child, co-parent counselling, and reunification counselling.

18. Child first started seeing a personal counsellor named Allie in 2020-2021.

19. Child was later recommended for a higher level of care and Dr. Tracey Hill started to see the minor child in 2023.

20. Child and parents also saw Clay Holland for co-parenting counselling in 2020-2021 and for reunification counselling from September 2023 to October 2024. This was pursuant to the custody orders entered in Northampton County. Stepmother also started attending some of those sessions.

21. Father requested the counselling with Dr. Hill be stopped after 7-8 sessions. Dr. Hill believed there was some parental alienation. Father disagreed and felt Dr. Hill was not being helpful. Father

ultimately decided to terminate counselling for Child with Dr. Hill because Child did not like seeing her as a therapist.

22. The reunification counselling stopped in 2024 because it was unsuccessful.

23. Child had made it clear in both her individual counselling with Dr. Hill, and in the reunification counselling with Clay Holland, that she no longer wanted to see Mother.

24. Mother also missed four (4) reunification counselling sessions with Clay Holland, including all three (3) scheduled for both parents together with Child.

25. In 2023, Mother filed for modification of custody. The matter was scheduled for a custody hearing in September 2023. The parties came to an agreement just prior to the hearing, and Mother's prior custody period was increased to include mid-week dinners. However, Child continued to reluctantly visit with Mother. When Child visited, she mostly stayed in her room.

26. Mother believes Stepmother and Father actively worked to turn Child against her. She points to some social media posts by Stepmother in 2022 that were derogatory about Mother's parenting.

27. At a Thanksgiving visit in 2024, Mother discussed with Child what she really wanted. Child told Mother she did not want to see her anymore.

28. Mother decided not to force the issue and to ease the pressure on Child, she stopped the visits. Child has not seen Mother since Thanksgiving 2024.

29. Mother wrote letters to Child to give to her at a later time when things were better between her and Child.

30. Mother sent some cards to Child for her birthday/holidays. Father confirmed one birthday card was received in March 2025, but no other cards, gifts or letters were received.

31. Mother bought birthday and Christmas gifts for Child, which she has kept for her in Child's room at Mother's home.

32. Mother has not called Child or Father since November 2024. Mother texted Child around her birthday in March 2025.

33. Father has not contacted Mother to discuss anything since November 2024.

34. The parties used Our Family Wizard for contacting each other, but Mother has not used it to contact Father since October 2024.

35. Mother has not attended any school activities or parent/teacher conferences, although Mother has remained on school contact lists and the parent portal.

36. Mother has a child support order for which she currently has no arrearages. Mother has missed payments and had contempt proceedings brought in the past. She would then bring the arrearages current.

37. Mother has not provided any other support or paid for anything else for Child, other than her child support payments.

38. Father and Stepmother have always encouraged Child in her relationship with Mother.

39. Mother sent Father a text following the Thanksgiving 2024 conversation with Child stating she wanted to terminate her parental rights. As a result, Father had paperwork for a voluntary termination drafted and sent to Mother, but Mother no longer wanted to do so and did not sign it.

40. Father does not believe [Child] and Mother can reconcile.

41. Child has a strong bond with Stepmother.

42. Stepmother has lived with Father and Child for eleven (11) years. They are close and do everything together as a family.

43. Child ... refers to [Stepmother] as her "mom."

44. Stepmother confirmed that Child brought up adoption in 2020. It was surprising to Stepmother and she did not encourage it, telling Child she has a mother and does not need to discuss adoption.

45. Stepmother admitted she made some posts to social media in 2021/2022 expressing dissatisfaction with the courts in dealing with emotional abuse. She believes her comments were generally about Mother, but were also about her ex-husband.

46. Stepmother has otherwise encouraged Child's relationship with Mother, until Child stopped wanting to see [] Mother after Thanksgiving 2024.

47. Father and Stepmother decided to file the petitions to terminate parental rights and for adoption in December 2025 because of Mother's continued lack of contact for a year, Child's negative feelings toward Mother, and her desire for Stepmother to adopt her.

48. Father and Stepmother would still allow contact with Mother now or after an adoption if Child wanted to do so.

49. Child wishes to be adopted by Stepmother.

50. Child has no bond with Mother at this time.

51. Child feels she has had a difficult relationship with Mother for a long time. She feels that she and Mother have never gotten along and it often results in Mother yelling at her. She believes paternal great-grandfather did molest her when she was 8 or 9 years old and does not feel comfortable at Mother's home since he still lives there.

52. Child does not want to see Mother and does not want to engage in any more reunification counselling.

53. Child calls Mother [by her first name]. Father and Stepmother have encouraged her to call Mother "mom."

54. Child presented as thoughtful, self-assured, well-spoken, with mature thoughts and decision making for her age.

55. Child understands [termination of parental rights] and adoption.

Orphans' Court Opinion, 5/8/2026, at 1-7 (unnecessary capitalization omitted).²

On May 8, 2026, following the final hearing, the orphans' court issued a decree involuntarily terminating Mother's parental rights to Child. Mother timely appealed to this Court. She presents the following issues for review:

1. Whether the orphans' court erred or abused its discretion in concluding that petitioners proved grounds under 23 Pa.C.S. § 2511(a)(1), where Mother did not possess a settled purpose to relinquish her parental claim, ceased forced physical custody at Child's express request to reduce emotional harm, continued monitoring school, sent texts and cards, wrote letters, purchased gifts, maintained a room for Child, remained current in support, and sought only a therapeutic path to repair the relationship?
2. Whether the orphans' court erred or abused its discretion under 23 Pa.C.S. § 2511(b) by treating Child's present preference and the strength of her relationship with Stepmother as sufficient to permanently sever Mother's rights, without adequately assessing the causes of the estrangement, the evidence of outside influence and failed therapeutic intervention, Child's important sibling relationships, the effect of permanent severance, and whether termination offered any concrete benefit beyond formalizing an already-stable household?

Mother's Brief at 2-3 (unnecessary capitalization omitted).

In reviewing an appeal from a decree terminating parental rights, we adhere to the following standard:

In cases concerning the involuntary termination of parental rights, appellate review is limited to a determination of whether the decree of the termination court is supported by competent evidence. This standard of review corresponds to the standard

² For the hearings, Father and Stepmother had legal counsel, as did Mother. **See** Orphans' Court Opinion, 5/8/2026, at 1. Child was represented by court-appointed legal counsel. **See id.**

employed in dependency cases, and requires appellate courts to accept the findings of fact and credibility determinations of the [orphans'] court if they are supported by the record, but it does not require the appellate court to accept the lower court's inferences or conclusions of law. That is, if the factual findings are supported, we must determine whether the [orphans'] court made an error of law or abused its discretion. An abuse of discretion does not result merely because the reviewing court might have reached a different conclusion; we reverse for an abuse of discretion only upon demonstration of manifest unreasonableness, partiality, prejudice, bias, or ill will. Thus, absent an abuse of discretion, an error of law, or insufficient evidentiary support for the [orphans'] court's decision, the decree must stand. We have previously emphasized our deference to [orphans'] courts that often have first-hand observations of the parties spanning multiple hearings. However, we must employ a broad, comprehensive review of the record in order to determine whether the [orphans'] court's decision is supported by competent evidence.

In re Adoption of C.M., 255 A.3d 343, 358-59 (Pa. 2021) (quotation marks, brackets, and citations omitted).

Termination of parental rights is governed by section 2511 of the Adoption Act, which requires a bifurcated analysis. ***See id.*** at 359; ***see also*** 23 Pa.C.S. § 2511. "Initially, the focus is on the conduct of the parent. The party seeking termination must prove by clear and convincing evidence that the parent's conduct satisfies the statutory grounds for termination delineated in section 2511(a)." ***In re C.M.K.***, 203 A.3d 258, 261-62 (Pa. Super. 2019) (citation omitted). If the orphans' court determines the petitioner established grounds for termination under section 2511(a) by clear and convincing evidence, the court must then assess the petition under subsection 2511(b), which focuses on the child's needs and welfare. ***In re T.S.M.***, 71 A.3d 251,

267 (Pa. 2013). Clear and convincing evidence is evidence that is so “clear, direct, weighty and convincing as to enable the trier of fact to come to a clear conviction, without hesitation, of the truth of the precise facts in issue.” ***In re C.S.***, 761 A.2d 1197, 1201 (Pa. Super. 2000) (en banc) (quotation marks and citations omitted).

As stated above, the orphans’ court terminated Mother’s rights to Child pursuant to section 2511(a)(1). **See** Orphans’ Court Opinion, 5/8/2026, at 10-11. Subsection (a)(1) provides the following as grounds for termination of a parent’s rights: “The parent by conduct continuing for a period of at least six months immediately preceding the filing of the petition either has evidenced a settled purpose of relinquishing parental claim to a child or has refused or failed to perform parental duties.” 23 Pa.C.S. § 2511(a)(1).

The orphans’ court provided the following explanation for its decision to terminate Mother’s parental rights under section 2511(a)(1):

We find that the petitioners have proven grounds under section 2511(a)(1). Mother has not seen Child or spoken to her since November 2024. With the exception of a text sent to Child and a card at Child’s birthday in March 2025, Mother has not had any other contact. Mother has not sent any other cards, letters or gifts to Child since prior to November 2024. Mother has not filed for a modification or contempt of the custody order since 2023, and she has not requested counselling again for Child and herself. Mother’s lack of contact with Child since November 2024 evidences a settled purpose to relinquish her parental rights and/or a lack of performing parental duties for more than six (6) months prior to filing the TPR petition.

In examining Mother’s reasons for the lack of contact, they are not sufficient to overcome the presumption created by her lack of contact. As Mother noted, she stopped contact because Child

told her to do so, and she wanted to respect that request and give Child time to adjust or reconcile. This is credible, and certainly an empathetic response to Child's feelings. However, Mother did not stay involved in any other ways. She did not attend parent-teacher conferences, or Child's other school events. Mother did not call Father to discuss how to reconcile the situation, or to inquire how Child was doing.

Mother also did not file for a modification of custody or contempt, or to reinstate counselling. Obviously, Child may not have gone willingly to Mother's home, or see or talk to her, or go to counselling. But, Mother did not try to do that either, even if it would be forcing the issue. Furthermore, Mother has remained living at paternal great-grandfather's home where Child does not feel comfortable or safe. Mother made no effort to change that situation, which likely contributed to the problem. While Mother's actions were what she believed were best under the circumstances, it was not enough to overcome the application of section 2511(a)(1).

Orphans' Court Opinion, 5/8/2026, at 10-11 (cleaned up).

Mother argues that the orphans' court erred in determining that she evidenced a settled purpose to relinquish her parental claim to Child. **See** Mother's Brief at 8-12. She asserts the record demonstrates that she stopped physical visits because Child demanded it, because Mother believed a "pause would reduce emotional harm," and that her intent was not permanent withdrawal. **Id.** at 9. Mother contends that her actions corroborate this intent, as she "sent texts, monitored grades, wrote letters, mailed cards, bought gifts, maintained [C]hild's bedroom, and paid support." **Id.** In Mother's view, the orphans' court failed to consider the numerous obstacles she faced to maintain direct contact with Child, as Child was resistant to visitation and contact with Mother. **Id.** at 9-10. Mother further asserts that

the orphans' court overlooked evidence of parental alienation by Father and Stepmother, which demonstrated additional obstacles she had to overcome to maintain a relationship with Child. ***Id.*** at 10-11. Finally, Mother argues that the orphans' court improperly faulted her for not filing a new petition to modify the custody arrangement or request counseling, as serial litigation is not a "prerequisite to preserving parental rights." ***Id.*** at 11.

At the outset of our analysis, we observe that subsection (a)(1) provides two bases as grounds for termination: for a period of six months preceding the filing of the termination petition the parent either (1) shows a settled purpose of relinquishing his or her parental claim to a child **or** (2) fails or refuses to perform his or her parental duties for the child. **See** 23 Pa.C.S. § 2511(a)(1). Although Mother's argument focuses almost exclusively on the former basis for termination, we find the latter provision to be applicable here.

"'Parental duties' are not defined in the Adoption Act." ***In re Adoption of L.A.K.***, 265 A.3d 580, 592 (Pa. 2021). However,

our courts long have interpreted parental duties in relation to the needs of a child, such as love, protection, guidance and support. Parental duties are carried out through affirmative actions that develop and maintain the parent-child relationship. The roster of such positive actions undoubtedly includes communication and association. The performance of parental duties requires that a parent exert himself to take and maintain a place of importance in the child's life. Fortitude is required, as a parent must act with reasonable firmness to overcome obstacles that stand in the way of preserving a parent-child relationship and may not wait for a more suitable time to perform parental responsibilities.

Id. (citations and quotation marks omitted).

"[T]he focus under [section] 2511(a)(1) is not the degree of success a parent may have had in reaching the child, but examines whether, under the circumstances, the parent has utilized all available resources to preserve the parent-child relationship." **C.M.**, 255 A.3d at 365.

Even where the evidence clearly establishes a parent has failed to perform affirmative parental duties for a period in excess of six months, the court must examine the individual circumstances and any explanation offered by the parent to determine if that evidence, in light of the totality of circumstances, clearly warrants permitting the involuntary termination of parental rights.

Id. at 364 (citation, brackets, and quotation marks omitted). Courts may "consider the whole history of a given case and not mechanically apply the six-month statutory provision, although it is the six months immediately preceding the filing of the petition that is most critical to the analysis." **Id.** at 365 (citation, brackets, and quotation marks omitted).

"In further consideration of the totality of circumstances, if competent evidence establishes the statutory criteria under [s]ubsection 2511(a)(1)," the court must then consider: "(1) the parent's explanation for his or her absence; (2) the post-abandonment contact between parent and child, including a parent's efforts to re-establish contact; and (3) consideration of the effect of termination of parental rights on the child pursuant to [s]ubsection 2511(b)."

Id. In considering a non-custodial parent's explanation, courts must determine "whether a parent has faced barriers that prevented the parent from maintaining the parent-child relationship." **L.A.K.**, 265 A.3d at 593.

"What constitutes a 'barrier' in the context of a [s]ection 2511(a)(1) analysis

is a finding within the discretion of the [orphans'] court, and what may constitute a barrier necessarily will vary with the circumstances of each case."

Id. "[O]bstructive behavior by the child's custodian presents a barrier to the parent's ability to perform parental duties, which mitigates the parent's failure to maintain the parent-child relationship." **Id.**; **see also C.M.**, 255 A.3d at 365 ("[O]bstructive behavior on the part of the custodial parent aimed at thwarting the other parent's maintenance of a parental relationship will not be tolerated, and certainly will not provide a sound basis for the involuntary termination of parental rights.") (citation omitted).

We have reviewed the record and conclude it supports the trial court's findings. The record reflects that in late November 2024, when Child had custodial time with Mother, they had what Child described as a "big argument," after which Child had Father pick her up from Mother's house. N.T., 2/20/2026, at 12. Mother then decided to cease visitation with Child because Child told her she never wanted to see her again, Mother believed the visits were damaging their relationship, and that they were causing Child emotional turmoil. N.T., 5/4/2026, at 36-38. Mother admitted that shortly after this incident she texted Father and told him she wanted voluntarily terminate her parental rights. **Id.** at 36-37. Father had paperwork prepared but she changed her mind. N.T., 4/6/2026, at 84-86. Mother explained that when she texted Father about terminating her parental rights that "she didn't actually mean it" and said this "in a period of despair." N.T., 5/4/2026, at 36.

Mother has had no contact with Child since November 2024—more than a year prior to the filing of the termination petition. N.T., 2/20/2024, at 14. Although Mother testified that she sent approximately ten text messages to Child during the year following the final November 2024 visit (and admitted Child did not read or respond to them), Father stated Mother has not called, texted, or otherwise contacted Child. N.T., 5/4/2026, at 39-40; N.T., 4/6/2026, at 60. Mother also stated that she wrote Child approximately ten letters and purchased her gifts, but did not send them to Child; instead, she said she saved them so Child could read and have them if the two reconciled. N.T., 5/4/2026, at 41-45. Mother further claimed that she sent birthday and holiday cards to Child, *id.* at 42, but Father testified that Child only received one card—a birthday card—in March 2025. N.T., 4/6/2026, at 65. Father further stated that Mother has not attended any school events, parent-teacher conferences, extracurricular activities, or medical appointments. *Id.* at 65. Although Mother continued to pay child support, she conceded that she did not ask the court to modify the custody arrangement or restart therapy with Child after the November 2024 visit, claiming it was financially prohibitive. N.T., 5/4/2026, at 32.

While there was evidence presented that Dr. Hill believed Father was alienating Child from Mother, Father explained he did not cease Child's therapy with Dr. Hill as a result; instead, it was pursuant to Child's wishes. N.T., 4/6/2026, at 110-12. Additionally, Stepmother admitted that she made

several disparaging social media posts about Mother in 2021, but explained that she never spoke negatively about Mother to Child and encouraged Child to make her relationship with Mother work. ***Id.*** at 19-25. The trial court found these explanations were “very credible,” that neither Father nor Stepmother made efforts to alienate Mother, and thus did not find these to be barriers to Mother’s ability to exercise her parental duties. ***See*** Orphans’ Court Opinion, 5/8/2026, at 12; ***see also C.M.***, 255 A.3d at 358-59.

Based on the evidence of record, the orphans’ court’s credibility determinations, and our standard of review, the record supports the orphans’ court’s conclusion that Mother, for a period of at least six months immediately preceding the filing of the termination petition has failed to perform parental duties. ***See*** 23 Pa.C.S. § 2511(a)(1); ***see also L.A.K.***, 265 A.3d at 592. Although Mother stopped seeing Child at Child’s request, she made no effort to otherwise stay involved in Child’s life. She did not perform any parental duties for Child, other than paying child support, in the year preceding the filing of the termination petition. Mother had no contact with Child and did not make any attempt to reestablish contact—through Child, Father, or the court system—nor did she take any steps to try to improve their relationship, such as through the reintroduction of therapy or by exploring other available options. We therefore find no abuse of discretion in the orphans’ court’s finding that petitioners presented clear and convincing evidence in support of termination pursuant to section 2511(a)(1).

We next consider whether the record supports the orphans' court's conclusion that Father and Stepmother presented clear and convincing evidence to terminate Mother's rights pursuant to section 2511(b). Section 2511(b) provides:

The court in terminating the rights of a parent shall give primary consideration to the developmental, physical and emotional needs and welfare of the child. The rights of a parent shall not be terminated solely on the basis of environmental factors such as inadequate housing, furnishings, income, clothing and medical care if found to be beyond the control of the parent.

23 Pa.C.S. § 2511(b).

Our analysis focuses on whether termination of parental rights would best serve the developmental, physical, and emotional needs and welfare of the child. ***T.S.M.***, 71 A.3d at 267. "[T]he determination of the child's needs and welfare requires consideration of the emotional bonds between the parent and child. The utmost attention should be paid to discerning the effect on the child of permanently severing the parental bond." ***Id.*** (quotation marks omitted). It is not enough that there exists a bond between parent and child to avoid termination. ***See Interest of K.T.***, 296 A.3d 1085, 1109 (Pa. 2023). Rather, the trial court must determine whether the bond is "necessary and beneficial" to the child, such that "maintaining the bond serves the child's developmental, physical, and emotional needs and welfare." ***Id.*** at 1105-06. Focusing upon the "child's development, and mental and emotional health," the trial court should assess whether severing the bond "is the kind of loss

that would predictably cause extreme emotional consequences or significant, irreparable harm” to the child. **Id.** at 1110-11.

Additionally, our Supreme Court has explained that “the parental bond is but one part of the overall subsection (b) analysis[.]” **Id.** at 1113. The needs and welfare analysis must also include the consideration of whether the adoptive parent “meets the child’s developmental, physical, and emotional needs, including intangible needs of love, comfort, security, safety, and stability.” **Id.** (citations omitted). “These factors and others properly guide the court’s analysis of the child’s welfare and all [their] developmental, physical, and emotional needs.” **Id.** Importantly, “[orphans’] courts have the discretion to place appropriate weight on each factor present in the record before making a decision regarding termination that best serves the child’s specific needs.” **Id.**

Thus, a court must examine the matter from the child’s perspective, placing his “developmental, physical, and emotional needs and welfare above concerns for the parent.” **Id.** at 1105. Our Supreme Court has cautioned that “the law regarding termination of parental rights should not be applied mechanically but instead always with an eye to the best interests and the needs and welfare of the particular children involved.” **T.S.M.**, 71 A.3d at 268-69. The party seeking termination bears the burden of proving, by clear and convincing evidence, that termination of parental rights serves a child’s needs and welfare. **K.T.**, 296 A.3d at 1105.

Mother argues that the orphans' court erred in determining that termination best served Child's needs and welfare. **See** Mother's Brief at 12-15. Specifically, she contends that in analyzing section 2511(b), the orphans' court gave too much weight to Child's preferences and its desire to provide Child with present stability without consideration of possible future reconciliation between Mother and Child. **See id.** at 12-14. Mother further asserts that the orphans' court failed to consider the harm it would cause to disrupt Child's relationship with Mother's other two children. **See id.** at 14-15.

The orphans' court provided the following explanation in support of its needs and welfare analysis:

An analysis of [s]ection 2511(b) factors also support TPR and adoption. Child is bonded with Stepmother and she has no bond with Mother. Child is now 14 years old and adamant that she wants no relationship with Mother. The parties have engaged in co-parent counselling, counselling for Child, and reunification counselling, and all have been unsuccessful. Mr. Holland, the reunification counsellor, believes that Child will not change her feelings about Mother and that reunification is not possible.

The feelings Child has can be attributed in part to mother/daughter teen conflict. However, the relationship started to deteriorate in 2020, following Mother's return from Williamsport to reside in paternal great-grandfather's home. Child believes she was molested or touched inappropriately by paternal great-grandfather in 2020, even though it was [deemed] unfounded by CYS. She has not felt safe or comfortable in that home since. This was confirmed by Child in her testimony, and by her always staying in her room when she was at Mother's home.

Rather than move out, Mother chose to remain in that home. Child's relationship with Mother has gone downhill ever since. At this point, Child does not want to see or talk to Mother. It is

doubtful she would voluntarily participate in any other individual or reunification counselling. Child is old enough that she is going to do what she wants to do. Child likely feels let down and disappointed that Mother chose to stay in the same residence after the allegations were made. It appears to be too late to reconcile those feelings at this point.

There was also convincing testimony that Child was anxious, nervous and concerned when she was going to Mother's home for visits. Child was relieved and relaxed when Mother stopped the visits, even though we recognize the visits were stopped by Mother at Child's request. Child gets straight "A's" in school and is an honor roll student. She is doing well physically, mentally and emotionally since having no contact with Mother. [Termination of Mother's rights] would clearly give the minor child peace of mind knowing there would be finality. The adoption would also complete and formalize the current family relationship of Father, Stepmother[,] and Child.

* * *

... Unfortunately, for various reasons related to Mother, Child no longer wants a relationship. While we feel for Mother, and recognize her obvious love for Child and her profound sadness over these events, we have to find in the best interests of Child. Under the circumstances, and considering all ... the factors of [s]ection 2511(b) and Child's strong feelings to be adopted by Stepmother, we find that [termination of Mother's rights] and adoption by Stepmother is best for Child at this time. Hopefully, Child's feelings may change and she will establish a relationship again with Mother, either as a minor, or when she is an adult.

Orphans' Court Opinion, 5/8/2026, at 11-13 (cleaned up).

Once again, the record supports the orphans' court's findings. Child testified she is currently doing well, she is a straight-A student, and that she has overall felt better and had less anxiety since ceasing visitation and contact with Mother. N.T., 2/20/2026, at 9, 14. Child stated she does not wish to have a relationship with Mother or to speak with her and that she has felt this

way for a significant time, predating their argument in November 2024. **Id.** at 16. Child explained she does not believe a relationship with Mother is possible because counseling did not work and because she does not feel safe at Mother's house because of the past incident with paternal great-grandfather. **Id.** at 25-26. Child testified she has a good relationship with Stepmother and wants Stepmother to adopt her. **Id.** at 17-19.

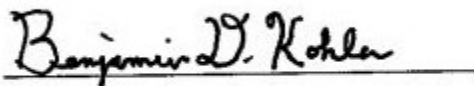
Father explained that other than Mother's child support payments, he and Stepmother provide for all Child's needs. **See** N.T., 4/6/2026, at 73. Specifically, he testified that he and Stepmother pay for Child's school expenses, clothing, extracurricular activities, medical costs, and that they help Child with her schoolwork. **See id.** at 67-68, 81. He further testified that Stepmother provides for Child's daily, emotional, and medical needs and that the bond between Stepmother and Child is like that of a mother and daughter. **Id.** at 81.

Stepmother likewise testified regarding her close relationship with Child. **See id.** at 6. She stated that she and Child are "very close, inseparable" and they "do everything together and it's like a mother-daughter relationship." **Id.** Stepmother explained that she works from home and consequently, can "provide structure and stability and consistency" for Child, that she cooks and cleans and is "there for her emotionally, mentally." **Id.** Stepmother testified she is a source of comfort and safety for Child when she is upset. **Id.** at 6-7.

Based on the record before us and the standard of review we must employ, we discern no abuse of discretion in the orphans' court's conclusion that Child is bonded to Stepmother, Child has no bond with Mother, Father and Stepmother attend to her educational, emotional, physical, and developmental needs, and Child will not be irreparably harmed by terminating Mother's parental rights. **See K.T.**, 296 A.3d at 1113. Accordingly, we conclude that the orphans' court did not abuse its discretion by finding that Father and Stepmother presented clear and convincing evidence in support of termination under section 2511(b). As such, we must affirm the decree terminating Mother's parental rights to Child. **See C.M.**, 255 A.3d at 358-59.

Decree affirmed.

Judgment Entered.

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Benjamin D. Kohler", is written over a horizontal line.

Benjamin D. Kohler, Esq.
Prothonotary

Date: 9/28/2026