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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

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Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

SB 665 Family Law - Custody Evaluator - Information to Parties

Statement of Support by Bill Co-Sponsor Senator Mary Beth Carozza

Thank you Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee for this opportunity to respectfully ask for your support of SB 665, which simply requires a court, in any action in which child support, custody, or visitation is at issue, to provide information to the parties regarding the role, availability, and cost of a custody evaluator.

I worked closely with my colleagues of the Workgroup to Study Child Custody Court Proceedings Involving Child Abuse or Domestic Violence Allegations to focus on areas such as evaluators, Protocols for child safety during investigations of allegations of abuse, therapists, and how waivers impact therapeutic relationships. Although this legislation was not an official recommendation from the workgroup, this simple provision was supported unanimously from all members present.

During our Workgroup meetings, participants shared examples where parents and other parties were simply unaware of the role of the custody evaluator and commented that it would have been a useful option to know about on the front end of the process. In this work we discovered the necessity for this targeted piece of legislation to require the court to provide parents with information to know all that is available to them in these cases. We found that presently there is no requirement for the court to notify both parties of the existence of custody evaluators. This legislation will not only provide that requirement of notification but also explain their role and provide additional resource information.

This legislation will be an additional tool to help protect children and families that may benefit from working with a custody evaluator as they go through these often stressful proceedings. I respectfully ask my colleagues on the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee for a favorable report of SB 665.

Thank you for your kind consideration.