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March 2, 2021

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RE: SB 842: Workgroup to Study the Assessment, Treatment, and Available Resources for Female Youth in Contact with the Justice System.

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Position: SUPPORT

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Dear Chairman Smith and Members of the Committee,

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The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,100 doctoral-level psychologists from throughout the state, **supports SB 842: Workgroup to Study the Assessment, Treatment, and Available Resources for Female Youth in Contact with the Justice System.** This legislation would establish a workgroup to review how well programs in the Department of Juvenile Services meet the needs of female youth and make recommendations for improving outcomes for females in the system.

Female youth involved in the juvenile justice system commit less serious offenses (such as status offenses and supervision violations)¹ and yet are drawn more deeply into the juvenile justice system than their male counterparts. These high-need, low-risk female youth are often survivors of complex traumas including physical, sexual, and emotional abuse, as well as other interpersonal and community violence, familial discord, and chronic mental health and general health issues¹. The passage of the Juvenile Justice Reform Act of 2018 presented a new opportunity to address the needs of female youth in the juvenile justice system where evidence-based and trauma-informed programming must be developed and implemented. In order for this Act to have its intended effect, developmentally and empirically sound interventions must be examined¹. The workgroup proposed in SB 842 would be an important step in meeting this need.

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Paul C. Berman, PhD

While SB 842 focuses on juvenile justice involved youth in Prince Georges County, we submit that this critical exploration would benefit juvenile justice-involved youth statewide. **Additionally, we would welcome the opportunity to take part in this critical work evaluating and improving the experience of female youth involved in the justice system, reducing recidivism, and improving outcomes by suggesting that a psychologist be included in this work group.**

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Stefanie Reeves, CAE

Thank you for considering our comments. We ask the committee for a FAVORABLE report on **SB 842**. If we can be of any further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the MPA Executive Director, Stefanie Reeves, MA, CAE at 410-992-4258 or exec@marylandpsychology.org.

Sincerely,

Esther Finglass

Esther Finglass, Ph.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage Jr.

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs