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February 6, 2023

Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair
Delegate David Moon, Vice Chair
Judiciary Committee
House Office Building, Room 101
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 285 - Family Law - Custody Evaluators - Qualifications and Training

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, asks the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to **AMEND and FAVORABLY REPORT** on House Bill 285.

The Maryland Psychological Association supports the intent of HB 285 to require appropriate training before a custody evaluator in Maryland can be appointed by the Courts to perform a custody evaluation. Many of the required training areas specified in HB 285 are already included in Judicial Rule 9-205.3. The Judicial Rule specifies that court-appointed custody evaluators "shall have current knowledge in...domestic violence...child neglect and abuse...family conflict and dynamics...child and adult development; and [the] impact of divorce and separation on children and adults."

In addition, Maryland Regulation 10.36.09 for psychologists requires education, training, experience, or supervision in specific areas to ensure that psychologists are "...competent to conduct child custody evaluations." Specified topics include, among other areas: child and adult development and psychopathology; family dynamics and psychopathology, including the impact of divorce; and Maryland law governing divorce, child abuse and neglect, and family violence.

HB 285, as currently written, specifies a training curriculum with identified topics. Since the literature and research in these areas, including trauma, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and child sexual abuse, is continually evolving, we are concerned about the specificity of the requirements beginning on page 3, line 16 through page 5, line 21.

Therefore, the Maryland Psychological Association urges the committee to **AMEND HB 285 by striking language beginning on page 3, line 16, through page 5, line 21 and by inserting: "AN INDIVIDUAL MUST COMPLETE THE APPROPRIATE TRAINING DEVELOPED BY THE JUDICIARY IN CONSULTATION WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE ORGANIZATIONS, THE MARYLAND BAR ASSOCIATION, AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH OF THE LICENSED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS."**

Thank you for considering our comments on HB 285. If we can be of any further assistance as the House – Judiciary Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Pat Savage at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Rebecca Resnik, Psy.D.

Rebecca Resnick, Psy.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.

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