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January 31, 2023

Senator William C. Smith Jr., Chair  
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East  
Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

#### **RE: Senate Bill 13 - SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS**

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 Senate Bill 13.

The Maryland Psychological Association supports the intent of Senate Bill 13 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 SB 13 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 [10.36.09.04](#) 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.

MPA greatly appreciates Senator Carozza’s time and willingness to work with us on this important bill. We understand that she will be putting forward Sponsor amendments that substantially address our concerns and encompass what we were proposing as amendments below.

These two paragraphs detail MPA's amendments that have since been handled by Senator Carozza's Sponsor Amendments.

**Rationale and Amendment #1:**

SB 13, 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 SB 13 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."**

We look forward to continuing to work with the Senator on this bill to address two remaining technical issues:

1. Lines 20-21, p 3. "complete at least 20 hours...in the following areas"  
**Question:** Does this mean a total of 20 hours, as opposed to 20 hours in each of the following areas?
2. Lines 25-26, p.6: "complete 5 hours of training...every 2 years."  
**Question:** Does this refer to training in the areas enumerated in the previous section? Is this a total of 5 hours as opposed to 5 hours in each.

Thank you for considering our comments on Senate Bill 13. If we can be of any further assistance as the Senate – Judicial Proceedings Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Pat Savage at [mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com](mailto: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