



Life Crisis Center, Inc.  
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**Testimony before the House Committee being heard in  
HB 1100 – Health – Child Advocacy Centers – Reporting Requirements and Investigations**

**March 11, 2024**

**Testimony of Life Crisis Center**

**Position: Unfavorable**

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The Honorable Joseline Pena-Melnyk  
241 Taylor House Office Building  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk:

The Life Crisis Center, Inc. (LCC) provides trauma specific therapy, shelter, legal services, 24/7 crisis intervention, and case management for survivors of sexual assault, sexual and physical child abuse, child sexual assault, interpersonal violence and human sex trafficking in Worcester, Somerset and Wicomico Counties. The three counties of the Lower Shore are primarily rural and lack many resources available to the more metropolitan areas. LCC ensures victims of crime in these jurisdictions receive much needed support and services that promote safety and healing, positively impacting future generations. LCC has internal procedures in place for continuity of care in the event any of our therapists leave, dies, cannot provide service or in the very rare instance when one is terminated. Thus far, we, like most of the state’s providers, have been able to ensure ongoing care for our clients. For the reasons set forth below, we respectfully oppose HB 1100 and urge the committee to submit an unfavorable report.

Demands for victim services greatly increased during the past few years. The cases are almost exclusively complex trauma with multiple layers of complicating factors such as, poverty, isolation and addictions. More and more adult victims of childhood trauma are turning to substances to numb their pain then unwittingly raising children in unstable homes, leaving a generation of children in extremely vulnerable situations. Trauma specific treatment from highly trained therapists is needed more than ever. Life Crisis Center and sister agencies in Maryland are set apart from other groups and organizations. The very heart of our work is mission driven. It is holistic in nature because the grant funding allows therapists to be there for the victims in ways that traditional counseling only services cannot be due to their structure and co-mingling of 3<sup>rd</sup> party payment dependency. Our centers offer “under one roof” services, like the Child Advocacy Center model, this lessens trauma and provides research based and trauma informed support. The Life Crisis Center (LCC) provides legal support services, advocacy, shelter, 24/7 crisis lines and crisis intervention on the premises, as well as satellite offices to help meet transportation needs across the region.

*To improve the quality of life in our community through crisis intervention and violence prevention*  
A United Way Agency Serving Wicomico, Worcester, & Somerset Counties

We are a collaborating partner of the three lower shore child advocacy centers. The directors of the CAC's may be a non-profit agency or a state employee. When a child requires the services of the CAC, they are connected with our organization as the mental health provider. The child becomes our client as well as a CAC client. Each partner agency and organization of the CAC recognizes the requirement to address the needs of child victims while fulfilling their own mandated responsibilities. By working collaboratively, each agency seeks to carry out its mission while also fulfilling the mission of the CAC. All LCC practitioners are licensed in the state of Maryland and have completed intensive training to treat trauma specific to child maltreatment. All CAC services are free of charge for child victims and families. The length of treatment will be determined on a case-by-case basis and are largely dictated by individual needs and complexity of trauma. Therapists are a part of the CAC multi-disciplinary team and participate in all appropriate meetings for the coordination of care and the protection of children.

The complaint provisions of this bill do not consider possible issues related to confidentiality. Life Crisis Center stores our own mental health information on our clients, and we have up to date agreements with the CAC partners that cover the confidentiality needs. In addition, reporting requirements under this bill are issues covered by Maryland state licensure and do not need to be duplicated. While one of the CAC's we partner with is accredited the other two are in the process of meeting NCA's accreditation standards. All 3 Counties CAC's require that mental health providers meet at least one of the following academic training standards:

- Master's degree/licensed/certified in a related mental health field.
- Master's degree in a related mental health field and working toward licensure; supervised by a licensed mental health professional.
- Student intent in an accredited mental health related graduate program, when supervised by a licensed/certified mental health professional.

Life Crisis Center currently meets this requirement for all our mental health providers, even the ones not serving the CAC clients. Lastly, we have concerns and need clarity regarding the fine process and possible implications on mental health providers as a separate nonprofit or would this impact the CAC as a whole.

This bill will negatively impact children and mental health providers in rural areas such as the lower shore. Youth serving agencies, including CACs, already have professional, legal, regulatory, and ethical duties to their patients and clients, and many have internal policies on continuity of care and staffing. This bill would needlessly confuse, contradict, and duplicate many of those policies. For these reasons, we respectfully request an UNFAVORABLE report on HB 1100.

Sincerely,



Jamie Manning, LCSW-C, CNP  
Executive Director