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Delegate Joseline A. Pena-Melnyk, Chair  
Delegate Bonnie Cullison, Vice Chair  
House Health and Government Operations Committee  
Room 241  
House Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Pena-Melnyk, Vice Chair Cullison and Members of the Committee

Subject: House Bill 1100 - Child Advocacy Centers- Reporting Requirements and Investigations

Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists throughout the state, asks for a FAVORABLE report on HB 1100.

House Bill 1100 as drafted requires that Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) from across the State institute the following best practices to protect the children receiving services from any lapse in care.

The bill accomplishes the following:

- Requiring annual reporting to the Behavioral Health Administration certain information regarding the provision of mental health care including: the operating procedures and guidelines for providing quality of care and continuity of care such as the transition of care between behavioral health care providers etc.
- Protecting the most vulnerable of children who receive services at a Child Advocacy Center by ensuring that such standards are in place.
- Protecting those providers who are providing such services at a Child Advocacy Center by codifying their ability to follow best practices and ethical standards as required by their profession.
- Creating a mechanism for complaints to be received and authorizing the Secretary of Health to investigate certain complaints related to Child Advocacy Centers.
- Attaching a civil penalty to complaints that are founded.

The MPA strongly supports House Bill 1100 as it serves to protect the most vulnerable children in our state, and the mental health professionals providing care to them.



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Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are an essential part of the care spectrum for children who are victims of abuse. CACs operate on limited budgets and despite that, excel at what they do. However, like all organizations they are fallible and need oversight beyond which they can provide themselves.

The impetus for this bill arose from a CAC deciding that their therapists were no longer being cooperative with staff and terminated the therapist's employment. As the law currently stands the organization is under no obligation to the children being served. The organization can fire the therapists, and not allow the therapists to have a termination session where treatment planning can take place to address the needs of this particularly vulnerable population.

There is currently no State entity that these children or therapists can make a complaint to, no specific State agency tasked with investigation of such events and no review of the data of even how often this may be happening. There are also no specific penalties associated with any failures that may occur.

Our Sponsors, Senator Muse and Delegate Cardin, have worked tirelessly with MPA to remedy this problem and to create much needed oversight. MPA has also met with the CAC's representatives multiple times- most recently this past Fall- to work with them to create agreed to protections. Unfortunately, efforts to achieve consensus on the establishment of safeguards have been unsuccessful. The CAC's indicated there is no data that indicates any systemic problems. For this reason, HB 1100 includes data collection to get a better understanding of the numbers being served and what services are provided.

However, more importantly, HB1100 goes beyond merely tracking data, it serves to provide some oversight of Child Advocacy Centers by the State of Maryland, places that receive yearly State funds and provides much needed protections to the State's vulnerable children as well as the mental health providers who help them.

Thank you for considering our comments on HB1100. If we can be of any further assistance as the Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Stephanie Wolf at [mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com).

Respectfully submitted,  
*Brian Corrado, Psy.D.*  
Brian Corrado, Psy.D.  
President

*Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.*  
Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.  
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

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