



**Worcester County
Child Advocacy Center**

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**A 501(c)(3) Organization
Federal ID# 26-0177198**

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January 16, 2026

To the members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

I strongly support SB 222 – Family Law – Child Custody Evaluators – Qualifications and ask for a swift and favorable report on this important child protection legislation.

SB 222 would help ensure the safety and well-being of children involved in child custody court proceedings where there are allegations of child abuse or domestic violence. This priority child safety legislation would require that child custody evaluators possess basic qualifications and receive foundational training before being appointed or approved by a court to conduct custody evaluations in these highly sensitive cases.

I have professional experience working in family services within the circuit court system and have seen firsthand the profound impact custody evaluations can have on children and families. In cases involving abuse or domestic violence, the evaluator's training, judgment, and understanding of trauma are critical. When evaluators lack appropriate qualifications or specialized training, the risk to children increases, sometimes leaving lifelong consequences.

This legislation is about putting the child first, and passage of SB 222 is long overdue. For the past six years, legislation has been introduced to require that qualified and properly trained child custody evaluators be appointed in these most sensitive custody cases involving domestic violence and child abuse. SB 222 mirrors the Judiciary's updated Rule 9-205.3, and it is imperative that these vital child protections be codified into law without further delay.

Placing clear qualification and training requirements into statute will help protect children in potentially dangerous custody cases and promote more informed, trauma-responsive decision-making by the courts.

I urge you to support SB 222. Thank you for your time, attention, and consideration.

Sincerely,

Lauren Cooper
Executive Director
Worcester County Child Advocacy Center