

The Circuit Court for Harford County

CHAMBERS OF
Angela M. Eaves
COUNTY ADMINISTRATIVE JUDGE

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January 8, 2020

The Hon. Bryan W. Simonaire
State House
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Senate Bill 101—Court Dog and Child Witness Program

Dear Sen. Simonaire:

I am writing in support of SB 101, the Court Dog and Child Witness Program bill that you are the primary sponsor of in the Maryland Senate. However, please, note that in accordance with the Judiciary's legislative policy, I am offering this letter of support on my own behalf. As one of the two jurisdictions to pilot a court dog program so far (the other being the Circuit Court for Anne Arundel County), I can attest to the benefit of such a program, and agree that it should be expanded.

I believe the program this bill establishes will greatly aid child witnesses in court who have often traumatized by the events that have led to them appearing in court. We know that adults have challenges appearing in court, so it is not difficult to see how much more emotionally and/or psychologically stressful it is for children to do so, since frequently, the circumstances that bring them to court are outside of their control. And, coming to court adds to the stress they have already experienced. Therefore, it is my belief that properly trained therapy dogs and facility dogs can, and do, ease much of the stress children of any age feel when they are in a courtroom.

In conclusion, I support the bill, and I hope your efforts to establish the Court Dog and Child Witness Program statewide will be successful. Thank you for giving me an opportunity to weigh in on this important legislation.

Sincerely,



Angela M. Eaves