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January 9, 2020

To: The Honorable William C. Smith
Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Kathleen C. Murphy, Director, Criminal Division, Office of the Attorney General

Re: SB 101 Courts – Court Dog and Child Witness Program -- Established

SB 101 will establish the Court Dog and Child Witness Program in the circuit court of each county that participates. Through the Pilot Program and others like it, child witnesses, who may have otherwise been hesitant or too frightened to testify, have been empowered to do so through the support and comfort of specially trained dogs that accompany them during their testimony.

The expansion of this worthy program offers another mechanism to empower some of the most vulnerable witnesses when asked to relay deeply personal or traumatic details of events. The successful use of such programs shows that child witnesses can be supported in a meaningful way without impacting the fairness of the proceedings. Therefore, the Office of Attorney General supports this legislation.

Thank you for your consideration.

cc: Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

