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February 23, 2021

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The Honorable Shane Pendergrass, Chair
House Health and Government Operations Committee
6 Bladen Street
House Office Building, Room 241
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: HB783 – Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences

Position: Support

Dear Chair Kelley and Members of the Committee,

The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists from throughout the state, is writing in support of HB783 – **Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)**.

We are writing in support of this bill. ACES screening measures a limited set of childhood experiences that can meaningfully increase the risk of adult mental and physical health problems such as child physical abuse, sexual abuse, child neglect, parental abandonment, and parental mental health or physical health problems. Communities use ACES screening to develop programs to prevent child abuse before it happens. Health care providers use ACES to guide early intervention during childhood to help children and families cope with emotional and physical consequences of ACES and prevent more harm.

ACES screening can be misused, when protective factors are not considered. An expert workgroup is essential to develop effective and socially just prevention programs. Also, ACES are related to individual, family and community characteristics. Therefore, prevention depends on helping communities as well as individuals and families prevent and treat ACES and depends on physicians, mental health professionals, educators, social services, law enforcement and public health professionals.

For these reasons, the Maryland Psychological Association asks for a **FAVORABLE** report on House Bill 783.

Thank you for considering our comments on HB 783. If we can be of any further assistance, or if you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact the MPA Executive Director, Stefanie Reeves, MA, CAE at 410-992-4258 or exec@marylandpsychology.org.

Sincerely,

Esther Finglass

Esther Finglass, Ph.D.
President

R. Patrick Savage, Jr.

R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

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