
To: Members of The Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

From: Family & Juvenile Law Section Council (FJLSC)
by Rebecca A. Fleming, Esquire

Date: February 15, 2021

Subject: **Senate Bill 497:**
Juvenile Services Education Board and Program – Establishment, Powers, and Duties

Position: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland State Bar Association (MSBA) FJLSC **supports Senate Bill 497 – Juvenile Services Education Board and Program – Establishment, Powers, and Duties.**

This testimony is submitted on behalf of the Family and Juvenile Law Section Council (“FJLSC”) of the Maryland State Bar Association (“MSBA”). The FJLSC is the formal representative of the Family and Juvenile Law Section of the MSBA, which promotes the objectives of the MSBA by improving the administration of justice in the field of family and juvenile law and, at the same time, tries to bring together the members of the MSBA who are concerned with family and juvenile laws and in reforms and improvements in such laws through legislation or otherwise. The FJLSC is charged with the general supervision and control of the affairs of the Section and authorized to act for the Section in any way in which the Section itself could act. The Section has over 1,200 attorney members.

The current laws providing educational programs for juveniles in residential facilities are inadequate. Although the facilities are operated by the Maryland State Department of Education, various systematic issues within the existing Juvenile Services Education System have consistently interfered with students receiving instruction comparable to public school students. There have been numerous complaints throughout the State that detained juveniles receive an inferior education and do not have equal access to the specialized instruction, related services and transition services to which they are entitled. The absence of an independent school board fosters a lack of transparency and consistency in the delivery of education services. There is not even a library/media center in each school.

The proposed law would create an independent juvenile services education system governed by a school board, with its own superintendent. The board and superintendent would have the



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authority to address the pervasive issues related to staffing, budget, quality curriculum, availability of special education services, etc.

In an effort to ensure that detained juveniles receive the education that they are entitled to, the FJLSC urges the Senate Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 497.

Should you have any questions, please contact Rebecca A. Fleming, Esquire by e-mail at rfleming@tnsfamilylaw.com or by telephone at (410) 339-4100.