

# Christine J. Drumgoole

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## SENATOR SUSAN LEE

SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE

2 EAST

MILLER SENATE OFFICE BUILDING

ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

RE: **SB0041** CHILD CUSTODY AND VISITATION

I am a well-educated, emotionally healthy protective parent, intimate partner violence/betrayal trauma survivor, and family court reform advocate. I hold a favorable position as to **SB0041 -FAMILY LAW – CHILD CUSTODY AND VISITATION**.

I would like to offer suggestions to this Senate Bill. My own experience with Family Court has been quite difficult, given the vague requirements of custody and visitation when abuse is present. There is little to no guidance for what constitutes “supervised” custody and what metrics or professionals decide the likelihood of abuse occurring in the future.

In my divorce/custody case, my former spouse had a long history of emotional, psychological, sexual, physical, and financial abuse against me and our children. The court often defers to professionals, such as social workers, therapists, and academics when trying to determine if an abuser will abuse again- the likelihood of future abuse. Child sexual abuse perpetration is an especially difficult construct to ascertain. There are diagnostic criteria for “pedophilia” in the DSM V and ICD 11, but an abuser need not be diagnosed as a pedophile (specific, sustained attraction to minors) to have committed an act of sexual abuse. Further, any lack or presence of a diagnosis does not necessarily determine the likelihood of abuse in future. In the case of my former spouse, he identified as a sex and pornography addict, admitted to illegal sexual perpetrations, viewing child pornography, sexually abusing our daughter, and yet had no specific target or sexual attraction for his abuse. In short, he is an equal opportunity sexual predator. Professional without specific, certified credentials in the areas of child sexual abuse, emotional trauma, and/or compulsive

sexual behavior and pornography viewing would not be able to make a professional determination; let alone an educated and credentialed opinion as to the likelihood of abuse. In cases of abuse, it is best to always believe the victim (especially victims of child sexual abuse) and protect the victim from any likelihood. A low likelihood of reoffending is NOT no likelihood of reoffending.

Secondly, when the perpetrator's family members are tasked with overseeing supervised visitation, especially overnights, they should be required to complete the following:

1. Notification of the abuse that has occurred to warrant the supervision requirement by a trained professional.
2. Required to communicate with the safe parent to confirm attendance for supervision.
3. Be required to follow safety measures as set forth by child sexual abuse professionals, such as Dr. Mel Lanston.
4. Held responsible if they do not meet the requirements of supervision.

I appreciate your time and assistance. I remain supporter of this proposed bill and am available for further discussion. I apologize for the brevity of this letter of support, but I wrote this in less than ten minutes. This is a very important cause.

SINCERELY,

CHRISTINE J. DRUMGOOLE

Healthy, protective parent, intimate partner violence/betrayal trauma survivor, and advocate.