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March 23, 2022

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Education, Health and Environmental Affairs Committee

Miller Senate Office Building

Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: House Bill 513 – Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program

Position: Support

Dear Chair Pinsky, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, is writing to express **SUPPORT** for **House Bill 513 – Infant and Early Childhood Mental Health Consultation Program** – which would establish a program within the State Department of Education's Division of Early Childhood Development to support positive mental and behavioral health practices for young children and their families, teachers, and caregivers.

Access to high quality preschool and childcare settings provide a foundation for children to build social, emotional, and academic skills that promote success during early elementary school and beyond. Unfortunately, many children who experience developmental, emotional, or behavioral struggles during early childhood have more limited access to these types of settings, and children who can enroll in programs are at elevated risk for dismissal or expulsion due to behaviors related to their developmental, social, or emotional needs. In addition to missing out on the benefits of quality early childhood socialization and instruction, these children often are not accurately identified or connected with available early intervention resources until much later than ideal, often after they have entered early elementary school. Given the robust research base that speaks to the significant and lifelong benefits of appropriate and early intervention for both individuals and communities, MPA supports HB 513's efforts to accurately identify children in need, provide training and support for their teachers and caregivers, and ensure that children in need of intensive services are supported in accessing those programs.

For these reasons, MPA urges the committee to **favorably report on HB 513**, to support Maryland's children and families. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the MPA Executive Director, Stefanie Reeves, MA, CAE at 410-992-4258 or exec@marylandpsychology.org.

Respectfully submitted,

Sincerely,

Linda McGhee

Linda McGhee, Psy.D., J.D.

President

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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