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February 8, 2022

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The Honorable Delores G. Kelley, Chair
Finance Committee
3 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Bill: SB 282 – 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 SB 282 – **Workgroup on Screening Related to Adverse Childhood Experiences (ACES)**.

ACES screening assesses a limited set of childhood experiences, such as child physical abuse, sexual abuse, child neglect, parental abandonment, and parental mental health or physical health problems. These adverse childhood experiences have been shown to meaningfully increase the risk of later adult mental and physical health problems. Communities use the data provided by ACES screening to develop programs that help prevent child abuse before it happens. Health care providers use ACES screening data to guide early intervention during childhood to support children and families coping with emotional and physical consequences of ACES, and to prevent more harm to these vulnerable children.

With all its benefits, ACES screening data can be misused when protective factors are not considered. An expert workgroup is essential to develop effective and socially just prevention programs. Further, as ACES are related to individual, family and community characteristics, prevention depends on helping communities as well as individuals and families prevent and treat ACES. This effort will depend on the collaboration of physicians, mental health professionals, educators, social services, law enforcement and public health professionals through this workgroup.

For these reasons, the Maryland Psychological Association asks for a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 282.

Thank you for considering our comments on SB 282. 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,

Linda McGhee

Linda McGhee, Psy.D., J.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