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February 22, 2022

Delegate Luke H. Clippinger, Chair  
Judiciary Committee  
Maryland House of Delegates  
6 Bladen Street  
House Office Building, Room 101  
Annapolis, MD 21401

#### **Bill: HB947 Position: OPPOSE**

Dear Chair, Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, would like to ask the Committee to **OPPOSE HB 947**.

MPA recognizes that joint legal custody and shared physical custody is appropriate and successful in many families and for many children. We also know well that children have better long-term outcomes when their parents are able to cooperatively co-parent and make joint decisions.

HB 947, however, does not take child development into account, does not take the parent's parenting abilities into account, and does not focus on an individual child's long-term interests.

The vast majority of parents manage their divorce outside of court. In fact, approximately 90% of families divorce without litigation. Thus, this legislation targets those parents who are in litigation and unable to manage their divorce without court intervention. These families often have their own individualized conflicts which require personalized attention, as opposed to a rebuttable presumption of joint legal custody and shared physical custody.

Furthermore, this legislation does not take into account the age of a child, their developmental needs, and special physical needs, or any other special needs.

We need a more individualized and focused approach for families who are not able to manage their family's divorce outside of court. A rebuttable presumption of joint legal and shared physical custody is not appropriate for these families and their children.

For these and many other reasons, The Maryland Psychological Association **strongly opposes HB947 and ask for an unfavorable report from the Committee.**

Please feel free to contact MPA's Executive Director Stefanie Reeves at [exec@marylandpsychology.org](mailto:exec@marylandpsychology.org) if we can be of assistance.

Sincerely,

*Linda McGhee*

Linda McGhee, Psy.D., JD  
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