

Mid Atlantic P.A.N.D.A. Coalition

5900 Abriana Way, Elkridge, Maryland 21075

From: Mid Atlantic P.A.N.D.A. Coalition

To: Chairman William Smith Jr.

Re: SB 29 Family Law - Emancipation of a Minor and Authorization to Marry

Date: January 21, 2022

Dear Chairman Smith.

The Mid-Atlantic P.A.N.D.A. is in Favor of SB 29

We represent the Mid Atlantic P.A.N.D.A. Coalition (Prevent Abuse and Neglect through Dental Awareness). We were established in 2000, our mission is "To create an atmosphere of understanding in dentistry and other professional communities which will result in the prevention of abuse and neglect through early identification and appropriate intervention for those who have been abused or neglected." Dentists and Dental Hygienists (Dental Professionals) are mandated by the State of Maryland to report suspected cases of abuse and neglect. Our coalition has established a Continuing Education (CE) course that educates Dental Professionals and others how to recognize, report, or refer. The Maryland State Board of Dental Examiners has deemed this course as a mandatory CE requirement for Dentists and Hygienists to renew their licenses. We also address domestic violence, elder abuse, human trafficking and bullying in our CE course.

This bill will protect children aged 17 and younger from marrying at an early age. An age when they are not fully aware of the consequences of marriage. It will help protect these children from being coerced or trafficked into marriage. They would be better protected from entering an abusive situation that they cannot control. If a child marries as a minor in our state she cannot file for a divorce until age 18 and may have to remain in an unsafe environment. This child would not even be able to enter a safe shelter until age 18. We must protect our young. Our state has become a destination for minors to marry early. We need to help guide our children, so they have an opportunity to mature before they are put into adult situation. We need to avoid children raising children.

Thank you for your consideration on SB 29 and ask that you vote favorable.

Respectfully submitted,

Mid-Atlantic P.A.N.D.A. Coalition

Carol Caiazzo, RDH President

Susan Camardese, RDH, MS Vice President Mid-Atlantic P.A.N.D.A. Coalition