



Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East
Annapolis, MD 21401

February 1, 2022

Bill: Senate Bill 20 – Criminal Procedure – Out of Court Statements – Child Victims

Position: Support with Amendment

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing on behalf of the Maryland School Psychologists' Association (MSPA), a professional organization representing about 500 school psychologists in Maryland. We advocate for the social-emotional, behavioral, and academic well-being of students and families across the state.

We strongly support Senate Bill 20 because, as mental health providers, we recognize the difficulty children under the age of 13 may have in providing testimony about neglect they have experienced. That is why it is important that qualified professionals are permitted to testify regarding out-of-court disclosures children have made to them. Although we support this important bill, we ask for one minor amendment:

On page 2, after line 4, insert "A SCHOOL PSYCHOLOGIST"

The current statute includes "psychologist," which could be interpreted to mean a psychologist licensed by the Board of Examiners of Psychologists. Because school psychologists are certified by the Maryland Department of Education instead of the Board of Examiners, we feel there is a risk that a school psychologist would not be permitted to give testimony under this bill. This could mean that a child who made a disclosure to a school psychologist would not be as protected as a child who made the same disclosure to another mental health provider or school official.

For these reasons, we urge a favorable report on SB 20. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please contact us at legislative@mSPAonline.org or Scott Tiffin at stiffin@policypartners.net or (443) 350-1325.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP
Chair, Legislative Committee

Maryland School Psychologists' Association