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February 7, 2022

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RE: SB 366 - SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

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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, asks the **Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to amend and favorably report on Senate Bill 336.**

Representative to APA Council

Peter Smith, PsyD

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The Maryland Psychological Association supports the intent of intent of SB 336 to require appropriate training before a custody evaluator in Maryland can be appointed by the Courts to perform a custody evaluation. Many of the required training areas specified in SB 336 are already included in **Judicial Rule 9-205.3** (see attached). The Judicial Rule specifies that court-appointed custody evaluators “shall have current knowledge in...domestic violence...child neglect and abuse...family conflict and dynamics...child and adult development; and [the] impact of divorce and separation on children and adults.” In addition, **Maryland Regulation 10.36.09** for psychologists (see attached) requires education, training, experience, or supervision in specific areas to ensure that psychologists are “...competent to conduct child custody evaluations.” Specified topics include, among other areas: child and adult development and psychopathology; family dynamics and psychopathology, including the impact of divorce; and Maryland law governing divorce, child abuse and neglect, and family violence.

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SB 366, as currently written specifies a training curriculum with identified topics. Since the literature and research in these areas, including trauma, emotional abuse, physical abuse, and child sexual abuse, is continually evolving, we are concerned about the specificity of the requirements beginning on page 3, line 16 through page 5, line 20.

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Therefore, the Maryland Psychological Association urges the committee to **amend SB 17 by striking language beginning on page 3, line 20, through page 5, line 20 and by inserting: “AN INDIVIDUAL MUST COMPLETE THE APPROPRIATE TRAINING DEVELOPED BY THE JUDICIARY IN CONSULTATION WITH DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AND CHILD ABUSE ORGANIZATIONS, THE MARYLAND BAR ASSOCIATION, AND REPRESENTATIVES FROM EACH OF THE LICENSED MENTAL HEALTH PROFESSIONAL ASSOCIATIONS.”**

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Stefanie Reeves, CAE

Please feel free to contact MPA's Executive Director Stefanie Reeves at 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