



HB262 – Family Law – Nonpayment of Child Support - Sentencing

House Judiciary Committee – February 2, 2022

Testimony of Adam Rosenberg Esq., Executive Director, Center for Hope; Vice President, Violence Intervention & Prevention, LifeBridge Health

Position: **SUPPORT**

I write in support of HB262. The Center for Hope, a subsidiary of LifeBridge Health, is a comprehensive violence program that addresses violence through the lifespan, and includes child advocacy, domestic violence programs, community violence interruption programs, and an elder abuse response.

This bill would require that sentences for nonpayment of child support run concurrently, not consecutively. While it still penalizes some parents for criminal failure to pay child support, this proposal removes the undue burden caused by consecutive sentences. Overly burdensome child support obligations are one of the impediments blocking some of our community violence clients from re-joining the local economy. Incarcerating parents for consecutive terms does not support the very families and children that child support penalties are designed to help.

The Center for Hope includes several community violence programs, including two hospital-based violence intervention responses and a community Safe Streets site – all which uses skilled violence responders and community health workers to engage patients treated for street violence-related injuries, such as gunshot wounds and stabbings, and offers follow-up workforce development opportunities, support and referrals after discharge. The hospital response program adheres to the evidence-based, nationally known, Cure Violence model, which requires collaborating with Safe Streets sites and other service programs and providing social services for violence victims and their families.

Since inception, Sinai’s hospital responders have assisted over 400 shooting/stabbing/street violence patients whose injuries were serious enough to be admitted to the hospital. These patients are predominantly male (90 percent) aged 18-82, with the vast majority between 25-40. Of 114 patients that the hospital response program assisted between June 2018 and July 2019, over 92% AVOIDED violent activity that came to the attention of law enforcement within 6 months of being discharged and 98% avoided being re-admitted to Sinai for an additional violence-related injury. Our programs work.

In prior sessions on this issue, we have shared about a young father who graduated from our program and found local employment. Unfortunately, past child support debt accrued during his incarceration proved unmanageable and he relapsed into selling drugs to help pay staggering costs. Within a year, he became another victim of the gunshot violence that traumatizes Baltimore.

For all the heretofore stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB262.

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