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February 17, 2022

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Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 561 - Child Custody - Cases Involving Child Abuse or Domestic Violence
- Training for Judges

Position: SUPPORT with Amendments

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 **House Judiciary Committee to amend and favorably report on House Bill 561.**

The Maryland Psychological Association strongly supports the intent of intent of HB 561 to provide training to the Judiciary about the impact of domestic violence and trauma on victims and children. In fact, members of the Maryland Psychological Association along with attorneys from the House of Ruth provided a seminar in the fall 2021 to judges and magistrates on these issues. We believe that ongoing training of the judiciary is critical.

HB 561 as currently written, however, specifies a narrow training curriculum with identified topics, some of which reflect current understanding, and others which involve current controversies in child abuse and domestic violence. The topics specified in the bill may, or may not, prove to be relevant in the future.

Therefore, the Maryland Psychological Association urges the committee to **amend HB 561 by striking all language beginning on page 2, line 3 through page 4, line 16.**

This change would allow the Judiciary, in consultation with domestic violence and child abuse organizations, to develop a training program that is flexible, relevant, and addresses the needs of Maryland's families. Further, we ask that the Judiciary set educational requirements for judges who are involved in family law cases and that only Judges who have received this training are able to preside over these very complicated family matters.

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

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs