



## State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN)

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SCCAN is an advisory body required by Maryland Family Law Article (Section 5-7A) “to make recommendations annually to the Governor and General Assembly on matters relating to the prevention, detection, prosecution, and treatment of child abuse and neglect, including policy and training needs.”

### TESTIMONY REGARDING SB 148:

#### VICTIM SERVICES PROGRAMS – SUPPLEMENTING FEDERAL FUNDING AND SUPPORT

#### (VICTIM SERVICES STABILIZATION ACT)

#### **\*\*SUPPORT\*\***

TO: Hon. Guy Guzzone, Chair, and members of the Senate Budget and Taxation Committee

TO: Hon. William Smith, Chair, and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

FROM: Wendy Lane, MD, MPH, Chair, State Council on Child Abuse & Neglect (SCCAN)

DATE: January 23, 2023

SCCAN supports SB 148, Victim Services Programs – Supplementing Federal Funding and Support. This legislation would stabilize funding for victim services programs by using state funds to supplement fluctuations in federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funding.

The Victims of Crimes act provides funding to states to support victim service programs. In Maryland, the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services (GOCPYV) uses VOCA funds to award grants to victim service organizations throughout the state. VOCA grants are vital to assist maltreated children and their families, through coverage of services such as forensic interviews and medical evaluations, family advocacy, and mental health treatment.

Approximately 58,000 Maryland children were referred to Child Protective Services for suspected child abuse and neglect in 2020, and nearly 30,000 children received an investigation or alternative response.<sup>1</sup> VOCA funding enables these children to receive expert forensic interviews and medical evaluations to determine whether abuse occurred and to identify the maltreater. For the more than 7,000 identified

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<sup>1</sup> United States Department of Health & Human Services, Administration for Children and Families, Administration on Children, Youth and Families, Children’s Bureau. *Child Maltreatment 2020*. Online at: <https://www.acf.hhs.gov/cb/report/child-maltreatment-2020>

victims of maltreatment,<sup>2</sup> VOCA grants pay for mental health services to help prevent and ameliorate long-term sequelae of maltreatment.

While the number of Maryland children with suspected maltreatment, and therefore the need for services, has remained consistently high, unfortunately, funding from VOCA has fluctuated dramatically from year to year. Inconsistent funding makes it difficult, if not impossible, to sustain victim services for maltreated children. Failure to provide these needed services increases the likelihood of revictimization and ongoing physical and mental health needs.

SB 148 would prevent these wide swings in funding for victim services and enable consistent provision of services to Maryland children.

***For these reasons, we urge a favorable committee report and passage of Senate Bill 148.***

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<sup>2</sup> *ibid*