



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

February 25, 2023

Bill: SB 503 – Criminal Procedure – Child Advocacy Centers – Care Providers

Position: Support

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 wellbeing of students and families across the state. School psychologists provide comprehensive psychological services to Maryland's students, including counseling, consultation and assessment. We are writing in support of SB 503, which ensures appropriate clinical treatment for some of our most vulnerable children.

Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers were established to meet the often-intense needs of abused children, and addressing these needs almost always includes psychotherapy. Appropriate delivery of psychotherapeutic services to these children is essential, yet a recent episode at one Center shows the need for this legislation. **Over forty vulnerable children lost their therapists with no notice, no termination sessions, and no continuity of care.** When this happened, many of these already traumatized children, who especially need consistency and predictability in their lives, and were at the highest need of quality counseling, were harmed by a Center created to help them.

SB 503 would serve to codify best practices to protect the children receiving CAC services from any lapse in care. This includes notification of children and their parents if there is a change in their health care provider at the Center, including psychotherapists. It also allows the departing therapist to conduct a final session to allow for closure and transition to the new therapist.

MSPA urges you to favorably report on SB 503, to ensure that abused children receive appropriate treatment in Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers. If we can provide any further information or be of assistance, please contact us at legislative@mSPAonline.org or Sarah Peters at speters@hbstrategies.us or 410-322-2320.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Phipps, M.Ed., Ed.S., NCSP
Committee Chair, Legislative Committee
Maryland School Psychologists' Association