



THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

**Testimony from Senator C. Anthony Muse**  
**SB 503: Criminal Procedure – Child Advocacy Centers**

Good afternoon, Mr. Chairman, Vice-Chairman, and members of the Senate JPR Committee.

SB 503: Criminal Procedure – Child Advocacy Centers, would require Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) from across the state to institute the following best practices to protect children receiving services from any **lapse** in care.

- Notification of children and parents or guardians if there is turnover in their health care providers,
- Allowing the departing health care providers, the opportunity to have a final session to allow for closure and transition to the new providers,
- Prohibits notification if it would endanger the child, and
- Prohibits a final session if a provider has been terminated due to harmful actions and behaviors.
- Clarifies that healthcare provider whistleblower protections will apply to healthcare providers who work at or for CACs.

CACs are an essential part of the care spectrum for children who are victims of abuse. They also, operate by and large on limited budgets and despite that, excel at what they do. However, when situations emerge that create a disruption in the staffing and provision of care, whether by directly employed care providers, or contracted care providers, SB 503 would ensure that the children are made aware of changes and that they can have closure with the providers they have come to rely on.

Colleagues, SB 503 is necessary. In fact, there was an instance, where children were negatively impacted by the sudden termination of their health care providers, which has brought to light the need for **standardized** procedures and establishment of best practices in the law. Maryland has an obligation to vulnerable youth to ensure that mental health services are competently and fairly delivered. This bill will prevent what has already occurred from happening again.

In closing, SB 503 will provide guidance to CACs and the health care providers that work with the centers, and transparency for the children and families that rely on their much-needed services.

Therefore, I urge a **FAVORABLE** report for SB 503.