



SB797- Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse

House Judiciary Committee – March 22, 2023

Testimony of Adam Rosenberg, Executive Director, LifeBridge Health Center for Hope

Position: **SUPPORT**

I write in SUPPORT of SB797, as amended in the Senate and House, to include a member of the Maryland’s Children Alliance. The bill creates a Task Force on Preventing and Countering Elder Abuse to address gaps in Maryland’s legal response to elder abuse.

Center for Hope provides integrated trauma-informed crisis intervention and prevention for over 6,000 patients and community members in the Baltimore region each year who have experienced elder abuse, domestic violence, child abuse, or community gun violence. Center for Hope is a subsidiary of LifeBridge Health, a regional health system comprising Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital, Sinai Hospital, and Grace Medical Center in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital in Reisterstown; and Carroll Hospital.

Elder Justice deserves a nationally recognized multidisciplinary model of excellence- including forensic interviews. Center for Hope’s Elder Justice Program was created over two years ago to provide an evidence-based approach to the growing, but often overlooked, crisis of serious harm caused to older adults. The pilot is based on the 40 year old evidence-based, victim-centered multidisciplinary model which is supported by the US Department of Justice and is followed by over 900 nationally accredited children’s advocacy centers in the U.S.¹ This proven, tested model is also the standard which over 20 child advocacy centers (CAC) in Maryland adhere to and is codified under Md Code, Crim. Proc. §11-928. The Maryland Children’s Alliance is the local chapter of the National Children’s Alliance, providing technical assistance on national standards for the state’s child advocacy centers. For decades, CACs have been the trusted partner of local law enforcement, social services, and prosecutors. Many child advocacy centers, including ours, receive requests from these partners to assist in coordinated investigations in complex cases beyond child abuse, including vulnerable and elder adults.

CACs also provide a **forensic interview**, conducted by a highly trained social worker, which elicits a neutral narrative response in a victim’s own words. It is digitally recorded and available for this team of professionals, which allows for the client to only have one interview, rather than endure the trauma of repeated interviews across different agencies, and the incur risk of inconsistent or incomplete statements to various investigative bodies.

Just as the family justice center, hospital response, and trafficking teams have been included in SB797 and will be consulted in the quest for a coordinated approach for elder justice, we thank the committee for including a representative of the advocacy center community to share in their expertise as to what has worked, what can be improved, and how we can leverage existing capacity in Maryland.

For all of these reasons, we request a FAVORABLE SUPPORT of SB797, as amended.

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¹ National Children’s Alliance, 2023, <https://www.nationalchildrensalliance.org/cac-model/>