

Life Crisis Center, Inc.
PO Box 387
Salisbury, MD 21803
Business: 410-749-0632
Fax: 410-548-9496

**Testimony before the House Judiciary Committee being heard in
HB762- CRIMINAL PROCEDURE – CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS – CARE PROVIDERS**

March 2, 2023

Testimony of Life Crisis Center

Position: OPPOSE

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Room 101
House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Dear Chairman Clippinger:

The Life Crisis Center, Inc. (LCC) provides trauma specific therapy, shelter, legal services, 24/7 crisis intervention, and case management for survivors of sexual assault, sexual and physical child abuse, child sexual assault, interpersonal violence and human sex trafficking in Worcester, Somerset and Wicomico Counties. The three counties of the Lower Shore are primarily rural and lack many resources available to the more metropolitan areas. LCC ensures victims of crime in these jurisdictions receive much needed support and services that promote safety and healing, positively impacting future generations. LCC has internal procedures in place for continuity of care in the event any of our therapists leave, dies, cannot provide service or in the very rare instance when one is terminated. Thus far, we, like most of the state’s providers, have been able to ensure ongoing care for our clients. For the reasons set forth below, we respectfully oppose HB 762 and urge the committee to submit an unfavorable report.

Demands for victim services greatly increased during the past few years. The cases are almost exclusively complex trauma with multiple layers of complicating factors such as, poverty, isolation and addictions. More and more adult victims of childhood trauma are turning to substances to numb their pain then unwittingly raising children in unstable homes, leaving a generation of children in extremely vulnerable situations. Trauma specific treatment from highly trained therapists is needed more than ever. Life Crisis Center and sister agencies in Maryland are set apart from other groups and organizations. The very heart of our work is mission driven. It is holistic in nature because the grant funding allows therapists to be there for the victims in ways that traditional counseling only services cannot be due to their structure and co-mingling of 3rd party payment dependency. Our centers offer “under one roof” services, like the Child Advocacy Center model, this lessens trauma and provides research based and trauma informed support. The Life Crisis Center (LCC) provides legal support services, advocacy, shelter, 24/7 crisis lines and crisis intervention on the premises, as well as satellite offices to help meet transportation needs across the region.

To improve the quality of life in our community through crisis intervention and violence prevention

A United Way Agency Serving Wicomico, Worcester, & Somerset Counties

We are a collaborating partner of the three lower shore child advocacy centers. The directors of the CAC's may be a non-profit agency or a state employee. When a child requires the services of the CAC, they are connected with our organization as the mental health provider. The child becomes our client as well as a CAC client. Each partner agency and organization of the CAC recognizes the requirement to address the needs of child victims while fulfilling their own mandated responsibilities. By working collaboratively, each agency seeks to carry out its mission while also fulfilling the mission of the CAC. All LCC practitioners are licensed in the state of Maryland and have completed intensive training to treat trauma specific to child maltreatment. All CAC services are free of charge for child victims and families. The length of treatment will be determined on a case by case basis and are largely dictated by individual needs and complexity of trauma. Therapists are a part of the CAC multi-disciplinary team and participate in all appropriate meetings for the coordination of care and the protection of children.

This bill will negatively impact children and mental health providers in rural areas such as the lower shore. Youth serving agencies, including CACs, already have professional, legal, regulatory, and ethical duties to their patients and clients, and many have internal policies on continuity of care and staffing. This law would needlessly confuse or contradict many of those policies. For these reasons, we respectfully request an UNFAVORABLE report on HB 762.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jamie Manning". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Jamie Manning, LCSW-C, CNP
Executive Director