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February 1, 2023

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Ways and Means Committee

House Office Building, Room 131

Annapolis, MD 21401

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**House Bill 185 - Nonpublic Schools and Child Care Providers - Corporal Punishment - Prohibition  
Position: Support**

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Dear Chairman Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

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The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, is writing to express **SUPPORT for House Bill 185 – Nonpublic Schools and Child Care Providers - Corporal Punishment - Prohibition**, which would extend the current ban on corporal punishment in public schools to all non-public schools and child care centers in Maryland.

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Jessica Rothstein, PsyD  
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Peter Smith, PsyD

Corporal punishment is ineffective and potentially dangerous, with substantial risk of abuse and of both short-term and long-term harm to the child. Recognizing this fact, the General Assembly wisely banned this practice in our public schools in 1993. Research evidence has repeatedly shown that the use of corporal punishment in children ultimately results in less compliance, while increasing aggressive and antisocial behavior. Some studies have shown that these adverse impacts are worse for boys than for girls; children of color may be particularly vulnerable to the overuse of punitive methods in some schools. In addition, use of corporal punishment has been associated with more mental-health problems. In particular, the more frequently or severely that children are spanked or hit, the more likely they are to have symptoms of depression or anxiety, both at the time they are corporally punished and in the future.

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**Communications**

Robyn Waxman, PhD

Highly effective alternative behavior management programs and methodologies already exist, and they can be readily implemented to replace corporal punishment in the schools and childcare centers affected by this legislation. As one evidence-based example, many Maryland schools are using the PBIS (Positive Behavioral Interventions and Supports) system of multi-tiered programming to help all children develop effective emotional and behavioral habits in school, as well as addressing the needs of children who present with more challenging behaviors. Many public-school systems have implemented such programs, and it is time for our non-public schools and child care centers to eliminate corporal punishment and to implement more effective behavior management practices. We urge a **FAVORABLE report** on this important legislation.

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**Professional Practice**

Karin Cleary, PhD

Thank you for considering our comments on HB 185. If we can be of any further assistance as the House – Ways and Means Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA’s Legislative Chair, Dr. Pat Savage at [mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com).

**PROFESSIONAL AFFAIRS**

**OFFICER**

Paul C. Berman, PhD

Respectfully submitted,

*Rebecca Resnick, Psy.D.*

*R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.*

**INTERIM EXECUTIVE**

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R. Patrick Savage, Jr., Ph.D.  
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cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association  
Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs