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February 29, 2024

The Honorable Senator Brian J. Feldman  
Education, Health, and Environmental Affairs Committee  
Miller Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**Re: SB 867 General Assembly – Fiscal Notes – Family Impact Statements - SUPPORT**

Dear Senator Feldman and Committee Members,

If you care about kids - I know that each of you does, you have to care about marriage and families.

As the director of the state's first initiative dedicated to strengthening marriages and families, I write to ask you to give SB 867 a favorable report in committee on Friday, March 1.

**The impact** of marriage and family breakdown has a measurable, ripple effect which doesn't just impact, it slaps all areas of society. The wave of teen violence that continues to crush the cities and bleed into the rural areas, is second to none. Absentee fathers, rampant crime, high cost of living, disincentives to marry, 1 in 5 marriages are struggling – these are simply the tip of the iceberg when it comes to critical issues which impact how families live and do business in Maryland.

**Is the topic of children and poverty** a grave concern to you? I'm sure it is. The financial advantages to marriage, compared to being single, divorced, and separated—are among the most well-established relationships in the social sciences related to the impact of child wellbeing. I urge you to study the report released by our friends at the Maryland Family Institute which provides a fairly exhaustive look at the state of marriage and family in Maryland.

**When we consider the social and financial stresses** that families are already experiencing, and 99% of all small businesses are mom and pop owned, it would be valuable to carefully consider what the impact of new regulations and laws would have upon their stability and wellbeing. Healthy marriages and families make your job easier.

Government bodies must do everything in their power **to remove barriers and increase opportunities** to help Maryland citizens form and sustain healthy marriages and families which in turn create healthy communities and a healthier Maryland. Please give SB 867 a favorable review today.

Amy M. Gilford

*Amy M. Gilford*

Executive Director  
Maryland Marriage Initiative  
Marriage & Relationship Education Center

