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January 29, 2024

Senator William C. Smith, Chair
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
2 East
Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

RE: SB0153: Maryland Department of Transportation - Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Awareness, Training, and Response

Position: SUPPORT (with amendments)

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists throughout the state, asks the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to FAVORABLY report on SB 0153.

Human trafficking and sexual exploitation thrive in the darkness of ignorance, and that veil is pierced only through educating people on how to identify it and where to report it. As those in the transportation industry frequently come into contact with individuals being trafficked and sexually exploited, it is of utmost importance that we require they be trained in how to respond when they find themselves in its presence. Requiring those individuals then to report those incidents to the National Human Trafficking Hotline, however, will create an influx of calls to the staff at the hotline that will overwhelm their overstretched resources. To that end, we would advise instead building a means for reporting within our state as part of our existing statewide task force. Creating an in-state reporting system will also serve as a means to streamline responses to reports and access to resources for those being removed from trafficking and sexually exploitative situations.

Thank you for considering our comments on SB 0153. If we can be of any further assistance as the Judicial Proceedings Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Stephanie Wolf at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Corrado, PsyD

President, MPA

Stephanie Wolf, JD, PhD

Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Richard Bloch, Esq., Counsel for Maryland Psychological Association; Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs