

To: Chairman Clippinger and Distinguished committee members,

I am Anne Hoyer. After my own personal experience in the family court, I began reaching out to professionals and organizations that were addressing issues I faced. To my surprise, I learned my case was not unique.

Throughout my career, I have focused heavily on issues affecting victims of domestic violence and abused children. I have heard from many men, women and children throughout Maryland of the challenges they faced and learned of the system errors within the family court. Errors that left them in the same position if not worse.

In 2018, I was honored to be appointed to a legislated workgroup. HB405 is a product from that Workgroup. This group was charged with seeking out common sense solutions to address the challenges family courts are faced with when overseeing custody cases where allegations of abuse or domestic violence are alleged. I am here in support of HB405 which would address the qualifications and necessary training of court evaluators when faced with the task of recommending life-altering decisions to the Judge. As you can imagine, the judges rely heavily on the evaluator's report and carry it with great weight. For this reason, I believe this commonsense legislation will help to ensure better outcomes for our children and families.

This will be the fourth session that a version of this bill will be presented to the committees. It is, in my opinion, long overdue. We have a responsibility and a moral obligation to create and pass laws that would help protect our most vulnerable.

I would urge a favorable vote on HB405.

Thank you.

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