



PO Box 368 Laurel, MD 20725

410-992-4258

[www.marylandpsychology.org](http://www.marylandpsychology.org)

## **OFFICERS OF THE BOARD**

### ***President***

David Goode-Cross, Ph.D.

### ***Past President***

Brian Corrado, Psy.D.

### ***Secretary***

Meghan Mattos, Psy.D.

### ***Treasurer***

Andrea Chisolm, Ph.D.

### ***Representatives-at-large***

Rachel Singer, Ph.D.

Deborah Williams, Psy.D.

### ***Representative to APA Council***

Peter Smith, Psy.D.

## **COMMITTEE CHAIRS**

### ***Communications***

Robyn Waxman, Ph.D.

### ***Diversity***

Mindy Milstein, Ph.D.

### ***Early Career Psychologist***

Alayna Berkowitz, Ph.D.

### ***Educational Affairs***

Sarah Crawley, Ph.D.

### ***Ethics***

LaShaun Williams, Psy.D.

### ***Legislative***

Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.

### ***Professional Practice***

Karin Cleary, Ph.D.

## **PROFESSIONAL AFFAIRS**

### **OFFICER**

Paul C. Berman, Ph.D.

## **EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR**

Taylor Dickerson

January 21, 2025

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

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

RE: SB 78 - Juvenile Child Sex Offenders - Juvenile Sex Offender Registry and Prohibition on In-Person School Attendance

Position: OPPOSE

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists throughout the state, asks the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to report UNFAVORABLY on SB 78.

We understand and strongly support the desire and intent behind this bill, which is to provide a safe environment in school for teachers, students, and staff. We are concerned that the bill seems overly punitive and inflexible, in that it does not address how these kids might eventually be integrated, if appropriate, back into regular school environments. We know that schools have mechanisms in place to address both the safety of the larger student population while addressing the educational, social, emotional and psychological needs of children who have acted out in a harmful manner. Additionally, schools have demonstrated the ability to safely reintegrate students who have committed serious offenses, on a case-by-case basis, back into the regular school environment when appropriate.

It is particularly concerning that children as young as 13 might end up on this registry, never to be allowed to return to any contact with normally developing peers in school, despite the very real possibility of effective therapeutic rehabilitation with some students. As the struggle which juvenile sex offenders have with social skills is often a major contributing factor to their offenses, it is of the utmost importance that they gain the experience of socializing with their peers to learn normative behaviors. Segregating juvenile sex offenders with no opportunity to return to school, nor to be exposed to a broader peer group, is a short-sighted approach that can lead to kids dropping out of school, kids forming or seeking membership in gangs, and ultimately feeding the school-to-prison pipeline. This bill appears to offer a short-term and inflexible solution with long-term potential adverse consequences, both for the child offenders as well as for the community.

Thank you for considering our comments on SB 78. If we can be of any further assistance as the Judiciary Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Stephanie Wolf at

[mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com).

Respectfully submitted,

David Goode-Cross, Ph.D.  
David Goode-Cross, Ph.D.  
President

Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.  
Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.  
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

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