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

April 1, 2025

Bill: HB 1480 – Child Advocacy Centers - Continuity of Care Standards for Health Care Professionals and Reports of Violations

Position: Support

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

I am writing as a retired school psychologist and an advocate for children's mental health. I have devoted much of my career to supporting and providing comprehensive psychological services to children in Maryland's schools, the Anne Arundel, Baltimore, and Kent County School Systems. I am writing in support of HB 1480, which ensures appropriate clinical treatment for some of our most vulnerable children.

Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers were established to meet the often-intense needs of abused children, and addressing these needs almost always includes psychotherapy. Appropriate delivery of psychotherapeutic services to these children is essential, yet a recent episode at one Center shows the need for this legislation. Over **forty vulnerable children lost their therapists with no notice, no termination sessions, and no continuity of care.** When this happened, many of these already traumatized children, who especially need consistency and predictability in their lives, and were at the highest need of quality counseling, were harmed by a Center created to help them. And when this happened there existed no effective remedy for the affected families and therapists. Our CACs receive state funds in order to perform their essential work, but they are essentially unregulated.

HB 1480 would serve to codify best practices to protect the children receiving CAC services from any lapse in care, making Maryland's CACs accountable to the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. This includes notification of children and their parents if there is a change in their health care provider at the center, including psychotherapists. It also allows the departing therapist to conduct a final session to allow for closure and transition to the new therapist.

I would urge a favorably report on HB 1480, to ensure that abused children receive appropriate treatment in Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers. If I can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact me at wmflook@gmail.com, or 410-703-1791.

Respectfully submitted,

William Flook

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