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LETTER OF SUPPORT: SB 25

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee:

My name is Tina Swithin and for the past decade, my organization has advocated for child safety legislation across the country.

Custody evaluators wield incredible influence over children's lives and strongly influence judicial decisions, yet their training, licensing, and expertise varies widely -- and often falls short, leading to inconsistent and dangerous outcomes.

Every week, I hear stories of horrific abuse and children lost to preventable tragedies. It is fundamental that anyone making decisions impacting a child's life has training in domestic violence, child neglect, abuse, and trauma. We need to raise the bar when it comes to the safety of our children.

You may hear opposition advocating for the inclusion of "parental alienation," a pseudo-scientific concept rejected by major medical organizations, including the American Psychiatric Association. In 2023, the United Nations special rapporteur called for this theory to be eradicated from family court systems worldwide stating, "parental alienation" is a "discredited and unscientific pseudo-concept used in family law proceedings by abusers as a tool to continue their abuse and coercion and to undermine and discredit allegations of domestic violence made by mothers who are trying to keep their children safe."

Maryland can become a leader in child safety legislation – I urge you to support Senate Bill 25 which will help protect the most vulnerable members of our society.

Citation: Custody, violence against women and violence against children: report of the Special Rapporteur on Violence against Women and Girls, Its Causes and Consequences, Reem Alsalem (2023)

Thank you for your time,

Tina Swithin