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SHERIFF MAXWELL C. UY

January 24, 2025

VIA E-MAIL: jeff.waldstreicher@senate.state.md.us

Honorable Jeffrey D. Waldstreicher
Vice-Chair, Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East Wing
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: **Senate Bill 25 – Family Law – Child Custody Evaluators – Qualifications**

Dear Vice-Chair Waldstreicher:

The Montgomery County Sheriff's Office, which oversees the Montgomery County Family Justice Center (MCFJC), a co-location of services to support victims of domestic violence, strongly supports SB 25 – Family Law – Child Custody Evaluators – Qualifications. SB 25 would help advance the safety and well-being of children involved in child custody court proceedings involving child abuse or domestic violence by requiring that child custody evaluators have met certain licensing and educational qualifications before appointment as well as completed training approved by the Administrative Office of Courts to perform a custody evaluation in those child custody cases involving domestic violence or child abuse.

The MCFJC works with clients on a daily basis who desire a life free from fear, violence and uncertainty. Many of those clients have children who have witnessed such abuse or have been abused themselves. Unfortunately, perpetrators will oftentimes use custody as an opportunity to control and overpower the victim. Given these stakes, custody evaluators must have the critical educational backgrounds, skills and training to understand the dynamics of domestic violence and child abuse and must be able to make informed decisions to keep children safe from harm – both mentally and physically.

This legislation is all about putting the child first, and passage of SB 25 is long overdue. For the past five years, legislation has been introduced to require qualified and trained child custody evaluators be appointed in these most sensitive child custody cases involving domestic violence and child abuse. This legislation mirrors the Judiciary's updated Rule 9-205.3, and it is imperative that these vital child protections are passed into law without further delay. Codifying the qualification and training requirements for Maryland's child custody evaluators will help protect children in these most sensitive and potentially dangerous child custody cases involving allegations of child abuse and domestic violence.

I urge you to support SB 25. Thank you for your kind attention and consideration.

Sincerely,

Sheriff Maxwell C. Uy

cc: Senator Mary Beth Carozza
Smita Varia, Acting Director, Montgomery County Family Justice Center