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January 21, 2025

To: Maryland State House Judiciary Committee

RE: Support for HB0152 Family Law – Custody Evaluators - Qualifications

As the Child Advocacy Center for the largest county in the state, we work every day at reducing the emotional impact of trauma for the child victims of physical and sexual abuse, neglect, witnesses to domestic violence and other life-changing events. Almost all of the children we serve are referred to us by case workers including custody evaluators in the Department of Health and Human Services and Child Welfare Services. While the proper licensing and credential requirements are currently in place as a rule, this bill further specifies the types of training and experience it is so important for these workers and evaluators to have in determining what is truly best for the child victims.

Studies continue to show how childhood trauma, if not addressed, has a negative effect on not only the victims' ability to lead normal, healthy lives into adulthood; but also a significant long-term negative economic impact on the children, the counties, and the state in which they live. This bill helps specify the range of trauma-inducing situations evaluators are confronted with every day.

In the last year, the Tree House has conducted more than a dozen training sessions on various aspects of child trauma for the Montgomery County Police, teachers and counselors in the school district, Child Welfare Service supervisors and case workers among others. It is our hope that this legislation may help ensure such trainings become more commonplace in other jurisdictions throughout the state of Maryland.

It is for these reasons and in the best interest of the children of Maryland that the Tree House Child Advocacy Center wholeheartedly supports this legislation.

Sincerely,

Charles Regan, Jr.
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