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PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

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February 24, 2026

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

RE: SB 711 – Family Law - Child Neglect Definition - Alteration

Position: SUPPORT

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

The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists throughout the state, asks the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to **report favorably on SB 711**.

The MPA recognizes the profound, wide-ranging, immediate, and long-lasting negative effects experienced by children who have suffered abuse and/or been neglected. These include but are not limited to negative impacts on physical development and health (compromised immune systems leading to the development of chronic diseases and a shortened life span), psychological, behavioral, and cognitive well-being (alters brain function by damaging the development of the architecture of the brain), academic performance and achievement, and social relationships, to name a few. They are well documented in a multitude of research. Perhaps the most well-known is the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente. The results of these studies were released in a widely known and accepted report in 2005.

A child's education is a critical element in their success in life, and it is essential that school-aged children participate in education regularly and consistently in order to see the best outcomes. Missing significant amounts of schooling can have seriously adverse consequences on a child's future, with likely outcomes including fewer employment opportunities upon graduation, lower earning power, decreased likelihood of enrollment in a college or career preparation program, and even increased risk of dropping out without completing high school at all.

There can be many reasons for a student's lack of attendance in school, but if the reasons include the parents/caregivers' failure to get their child to school or to work with the school to ensure good attendance, this neglect of the student's basic needs should be treated just as seriously as the other elements of the current abuse/neglect reporting law.

The MPA applauds the Committee for its ongoing willingness to consider strengthening support that the community might be able to provide to children facing abuse and/or neglect, therefore, the **Maryland Psychological Association supports SB 711 and urges a favorable Committee Report**.

If we can be of any further assistance as the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D. at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
President

Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs