

TESTIMONY OF JESSICA GORSKI

Commissioner, Anne Arundel County Commission for Women

IN SUPPORT OF SB 505

First Degree Child Abuse – Continuing Course of Child Abuse

Submitted to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee February 9, 2021

Position: SUPPORT

Chair Smith and members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of SB 505 – First Degree Child Abuse – Continuing Course of Child Abuse. My name is Jessica Gorski and I currently serve as a Commissioner on the Anne Arundel County Commission for Women. The Commission has identified this as part of our priority legislation for 2021 and we strongly encourage a favorable report for SB 505 which by making a continuing course of child abuse part of the first degree child abuse statute, it makes the continued course of action a crime of violence providing stiffer penalties that will better protect women and families.

Currently first degree child abuse requires death of the child or a serious physical injury which is defined as a brain injury, bleeding within the skull, substantial risk of death, disfigurement or the loss or impairment of a bodily organ. First degree child abuse does not cover children with numerous healing fractures, repeated abuse, some burns or other injuries often diagnosed by medical professionals as torture. Instead these repeated injuries can only be covered by 2nd child abuse which is not a crime of violence, maxes out at ten years which only requires a perpetrator to serve 1/4 of their sentence before they're eligible for parole. This puts a continued course of child abuse on par with misdemeanor second degree assault and does not provide the same needed protections to women and families.

This bill adds a continuing course of physical child abuse to the statute for first degree child abuse. This legislation protects all of the State's most vulnerable victims, our children, of all races and nationalities.

Thank you for your consideration. The Anne Arundel County Commission for Women urges a favorable vote on SB 505.