

## **TESTIMONY OF JESSICA GORSKI**

**Healthcare Huddle Facilitator, WISE Healthcare Huddle**

**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 am the Healthcare Huddle Facilitator for Maryland WISE Women, an organization of over 800 women in Anne Arundel County. I also serve on the WISE Leadership Committee. In addition, I represent WISE as a member organization of the Maryland Legislative Coalition (MLC), a group of grassroots organizations consisting of over 30,000 Marylanders statewide. 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. Maryland WISE Women urges a favorable vote on SB 505.