



## VICTIM SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

January 27, 2022

The Honorable Luke Clippinger  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
Room 101, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support – HB104 - Family Law – Child Custody and Visitation

Dear Chairman Clippinger:

Senate Bill 41 alters the current law by requiring a court, in a custody or visitation proceeding, to deny custody or visitation rights to a party if the court finds by a preponderance of the evidence that a child has been abused or neglected by the party, unless the court specifically finds that there is no likelihood of further child abuse or neglect by the party and states the reasons for the finding; authorizing the court to approve a supervised visitation arrangement under certain circumstances.

The Montgomery County Victim Services Advisory Board advises the County Council and County Executive on assisting the needs of victims of a broad range of violent crimes, including rape, domestic violence, sexual assault and human trafficking. The number and severity of sexual assault and domestic violence cases referred to the Montgomery County HHS Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program and the Abused Persons Program has continued to increase substantially during the pandemic, with more than 1800 requests for help in FY21 and 500 requests already received during the first quarter of FY 22. More than 2,500 domestic violence protective order petitions were filed in Montgomery County District Court in 2021.

This bill is necessary and vital because it prioritizes the safety of children during what might be the most contentious and stressful time of their lives - a custody struggle. Abuse and neglect can never be tolerated, and this bill helps tighten the protections for children. It gives the courts concrete remedies to step in on behalf of our youngest and most vulnerable citizens. This critical discretion by the court can be a potentially life altering or lifesaving decision.

VSAB asks the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 104.

Sincerely,

Neda Bolourian  
VSAB Member

Department of Health and Human Services