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February 4, 2020

Senate Committee on General Government and Emergency Preparedness

Re: Senate Bill 1558

Dear Chair Riley and Committee Members:

The Marion County Bar Association writes this letter to stress the need for, and importance of, access to free childcare for parents or caretakers who have court business. The MCBA fully supports the CourtCare concept or a similar concept that will facilitate court access and participation while also protecting children from court proceedings that are not proper for children.

The MCBA generally does not take positions on pending legislation or legislative matters and is not doing so regarding this particular bill. The MCBA is, however, very aware of the vital need for parents and caretakers who are involved in criminal, domestic violence, child custody and other sensitive proceedings to attend those proceedings. If they cannot attend, they may be denied effective access to our justice system. Simultaneously, the MCBA is very aware of the need to keep children out of the courtroom to allow court business to be conducted free of interruption. This not only benefits the court, it allows the parties to focus on the courtroom proceedings without the need to attend to children, and, critically, it protects children from hearing inappropriate information and testimony.

The MCBA welcomes any and all efforts to address the need for free childcare for court proceedings for participants who also have child caretaking responsibilities.

Please let us know if you have any questions.

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