

Kathi L. Grasso
4514 Connecticut Avenue, N.W., #502
Washington, D.C. 20008
(202) 441-6043
kathi.grasso@gmail.com

February 18, 2019

Ms. Mimi Laver
ABA Center on Children and the Law
Mark Hardin Award
1050 Connecticut Avenue, NW, 4th Floor
Washington, DC 20036

RE: Nomination of William Grimm for 2019 Mark Hardin Award

Dear Ms. Laver:

I write this letter in support of William "Bill" Grimm's nomination for the 2019 Mark Hardin Award for Child Welfare Legal Scholarship and Systems Change. Bill is highly deserving of this great honor. As I have known Bill for over 35 years in his professional roles, I can fully attest that Bill has contributed significantly to the development and implementation of systemic reform beneficial to this nation's children, youth, and families. Most importantly, so much like Mark Hardin, he has built a legacy of mentorship and inspiration for so many younger attorneys who are now engaged in influential child and youth advocacy. I can think of no one more deserving of this award than Bill.

Over decades, as an innovative litigator, scholar, and educator, Bill has exhibited extraordinary compassion and commitment to children and youth at risk for or placement in the foster care system. I first met Bill in 1982 when I joined the staff of Maryland's Legal Aid Bureau (LAB). I had the good fortune of joining LAB at the time when Bill was leading the effort to create a statewide child advocacy program out of concern that children who were the subject of abuse and neglect proceedings were not being appointed counsel as mandated by federal and state law. This effort was no small undertaking in that Bill had to negotiate with high-level Maryland officials, including the Governor and the Chief Judge of Maryland's Court of Appeals, to implement this innovative program. He was highly effective in these negotiations. They resulted in a contract with the State of Maryland that over many years has enhanced the quality of legal services for children and youth involved in Maryland's child welfare system. This contract continues to this very day. Since 1982, hundreds of highly trained lawyers and legal assistants have given thousands of children and youth a voice in Maryland's courts and related systems. Maryland's child advocacy program continues to be a model for the nation.

On a more personal note, I mentioned earlier Bill's exceptional capacity to be a mentor to less experienced attorneys. I pursued a career in child and youth advocacy because of Bill. I will always remember how he inspired me to pursue this path through his stellar classroom

teaching and sensitive individual mentoring. I am forever grateful for how he encouraged me to undertake challenging leadership roles at LAB, the ABA Center for Children and the Law, and the U.S. Department of Justice. I know that I am not alone as many of my LAB and other colleagues experienced the same in their interactions with Bill.

As reflected in his numerous achievements at Maryland's LAB and the National Center for Youth Law, Bill is a highly creative and critical thinker who has a deep substantive understanding of legal strategy and the multidisciplinary nature of positive systemic change. He is a "giant" in the field of child advocacy with a lasting legacy of exceptional accomplishment. At the same time, he is above-all a modest individual who is kind, generous, and good-humored.

It has been a privilege to provide these insights on Bill. Thank you so much for affording me this opportunity to share my impressions of this brilliant lawyer and wonderful man.

Sincerely,

Kathi L. Grasso