

Chapter 52

(Senate Bill 567)

AN ACT concerning

**Workgroup to Study Child Custody Court ~~Decisions~~ Proceedings Involving
Child Abuse or Domestic Violence Allegations**

FOR the purpose of establishing the Workgroup to Study Child Custody Court ~~Decisions~~ Proceedings Involving Child Abuse or Domestic Violence Allegations; providing for the composition, chair, and staffing of the Workgroup; prohibiting a member of the Workgroup from receiving certain compensation, but authorizing the reimbursement of certain expenses; requiring the Workgroup to study and make recommendations regarding certain matters; requiring the Workgroup to report its findings and recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before certain dates; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the Workgroup to Study Child Custody Court ~~Decisions~~ Proceedings Involving Child Abuse or Domestic Violence Allegations.

SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
That:

(a) There is a Workgroup to Study Child Custody Court ~~Decisions~~ Proceedings Involving Child Abuse or Domestic Violence Allegations.

(b) The Workgroup consists of the following members:

(1) two members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of the Senate;

(2) two members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of the House;

(3) the Secretary of State, or the Secretary's designee;

(4) ~~the Chair of the Conference of Circuit Court Judges, or the Chair's designee~~ the Public Defender of Maryland, or the Public Defender's designee; and

(5) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

(i) three representatives of child advocacy nonprofit organizations;

(ii) one representative of the Maryland State's Attorneys' Association;

(iii) one attorney specializing in family law matters;

- (iv) one prosecutor who handles primarily child abuse cases;
 - (v) one representative of the Department of Human Services;
 - (vi) one representative of Child Advocacy Centers;
 - (vii) one ~~retired circuit court judge~~ representative of a domestic violence victim advocacy group or coalition;
 - (viii) one trauma recovery and education expert;
 - (ix) one nonoffending parent who has been involved in a child abuse matter and has taken legal action to protect the nonoffending parent's children; ~~and~~
 - (x) one representative of a rape crisis center or coalition;
 - (xi) one representative of a fathers' rights group; and
 - (xii) one individual appointed at the Governor's discretion.
- (c) The Secretary of State, or the Secretary's designee, shall chair the Workgroup.
- (d) The Department of Legislative Services shall provide staff for the Workgroup.
- (e) A member of the Workgroup:
- (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Workgroup; but
 - (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.
- (f) The Workgroup shall:
- (1) study State child custody court ~~decisions involving~~ processes for when child abuse or domestic violence allegations are made during court proceedings;
 - (2) study available science and best practices pertaining to children in traumatic situations, including trauma-informed decision making; and
 - (3) make recommendations about how State courts could incorporate in court proceedings the latest science ~~in making legal determinations regarding~~ regarding the safety and well-being of children and other victims of domestic violence.

(g) On or before December 1, 2019, the Workgroup shall submit an interim report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

(h) On or before June 1, 2020, the Workgroup shall submit a final report of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June 1, 2019. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 6 months and, at the end of November 30, 2020, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly, shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.

Approved by the Governor, April 18, 2019.