



HB1558 – Residential Treatment Centers and Facilities – Sexual Abuse and Harassment –
Reporting and Prevention
House Judiciary Committee – March 10, 2020
Testimony of Joyce Lombardi, Baltimore Child Abuse Center (410) 396-6147
Position: **SUPPORT**

I am writing in support of HB1558. HB 1558 will require the reporting and prevention of abuse and harassment in certain private State facilities to forensic residential centers and residential treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children and adolescents; will require those entities to report certain complaints of sexual abuse and sexual harassment to CPS and Disability Rights Md; and will require certain entities to develop and implement certain policies and procedures to prevent sex abuse and assault. The law apparently codifies what COMAR regulations already require.

Serving as an entity of Lifebridge Health (LBH), Baltimore Child Abuse Center BCAC is Maryland's first accredited children's advocacy center and a chartered member of the National Children's Alliance and the Maryland Children's Alliance. Working in a multidisciplinary team, BCAC provides child abuse victims with forensic interviews, medical treatment, family advocacy, and mental health services.

BCAC has also trained thousands of mandated reporters about their duty to report suspect child abuse or neglect. BCAC also has a free course to train mandated reporters on how to identify, prevent and report child abuse in its Online Training Institute at its website. The site is updated to reflect changes in the law and we also serve as resources on mandatory reporting laws in all 50



Maryland's Resource for
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states. The site is ReportAbuseMd.com and <https://training.reportabusemd.com/> The site was constructed with funding provided by Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention/Children's Justice Act Grant. Baltimore Child Abuse Center is authorized by the Board of Social Work Examiners in Maryland to sponsor social work continuing education programs and this training qualifies for Category II continuing education units.

Mandated reporters are the key to preventing child abuse. Over 60 percent of reports of child abuse come from professionals who work with youth, like mental health, medical educational, police and human service workers, all of whom have a legal duty to report suspected abuse. Mandated reporting is key to preventing abuse.

Disability Rights Md has statutory authority to investigate certain facilities. In the 70s, U.S. Congress granted Disability Rights Maryland unique statutory authority to conduct investigations of suspected abuse and neglect of individuals with disabilities in certain facilities. Disability Rights works in tandem with police and CPS for child abuse investigations. Due to its Congressional authority, it is also able to conduct more robust investigations of a facility's operating conditions and licensure. This added layer of protection can help children and adults with intellectual and physical disabilities, a population that is very vulnerable to abuse but not always able to adequately explain what happened.

For all of the heretofore stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB1558.