



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: House Bill 1558 - Residential Treatment Centers and Facilities - Sexual Abuse and Harassment - Reporting and Prevention

SPONSOR: Delegate Valentino-Smith, *et al.*

HEARING DATE: March 10, 2020

COMMITTEE: Judiciary

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 1558 - Residential Treatment Centers and Facilities - Sexual Abuse and Harassment - Reporting and Prevention**, which expands current reporting requirements for inpatient facilities maintained by the Behavioral Health Administration regarding reporting abuse and harassment to forensic residential centers and residential treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children and adolescents (now referred to as covered entities). The bill also specifies to whom complaints of sexual abuse and harassment must be sent and requires covered entities to adopt policies and procedures that address complaints, and not just allegations, of sexual abuse and harassment. In addition, the bill requires covered entities to adopt a written protection plan based on a patient's risk of being a victim or perpetrator of sexual or physical abuse.

The Prince George's County Human Trafficking Task Force coordinates at least 13 government agencies and more than 20 non-profit organizations with a shared goal of identifying, rescuing, and restoring victims of human trafficking. It is well known that between 90-94% of human sex trafficking victims were sexually abused as a child. Additionally, one in four women and one in six men are victims of some form of sexual assault before the age of 18. This bill defines and expands covered entities, which would be required to report complaints of sexual abuse and harassment, in addition to implementing a way to respond to those complaints, and requires the creation of protection plans for those victims. SB 818 will enhance the prevention aspect of sexual abuse and harassment, which by extension can reduce the likeliness that individuals become victims of human sex trafficking.

For the reasons stated above, the Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS House Bill 1558** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.