

Testimony before the House Ways and Means Committee
House Bill 618: Maryland Parental Rights Act

****Opposed****
February 17, 2022

The National Association of Social Workers, Maryland Chapter (NASW-MD) appreciates the intent of House Bill 618: Maryland Parental Rights Act. The bill proposes to enumerate and detail the rights that parents have to direct their minor child's education and health in public school settings.

Over 500 social workers are employed in Maryland public schools, assisting students and families to remove barriers to learning so that students receive optimal benefit from the instruction that is provided. Research strongly supports that the involvement of parents in a child's education is one of the best predictors of student success. As social workers, we are advocates for strong families and work to include parents in the educational process on a daily basis. However, we have concerns about the unintended consequences that this legislation may impose.

Social workers have a legal and ethical obligation to support the best interest of their clients. In almost all cases, involving parents and families is aligned with the student's interest. However, mental health can be a complex issue with each situation presenting in its own unique way, sometimes with life and death consequences. It is critical that clinicians retain the flexibility to respond to each situation individually.

In summary, NASW-MD understands and appreciates the intention of HB 618 but must express our strong concerns as it is currently framed.

Respectfully,

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