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**Oppose**  
**House Bill 618 – Maryland Parental Rights Act**  
Ways and Means Committee  
February 17, 2022

The Maryland Assembly on School-Based Health Care (MASBHC) strongly opposes House Bill 618 – Maryland Parental Rights Act. This bill attempts to make several changes that will have negative impacts on children’s health.

Maryland law permits children to consent to certain medical care including treatment for behavioral health needs, sexually transmitted infections and contraception. Although health care providers always seek to involve parents in children’s care, there are many important reasons students have the option to access sensitive care confidentially. If children cannot access care without parental involvement, there may be delays in accessing necessary behavioral and reproductive health care. School-based health centers must have parent consent to enroll their child in the health center, but following enrollment, students are permitted to consent to the types of care enumerated in current law. This bill creates a criminal penalty if a provider fails to get consent of a parent when required. Providers already take very seriously their responsibility to get parental consent, but the possibility of a criminal charge will have a chilling effect on providers’ willingness to provide care with minor consent even when such care would be legal and in the best interest of the child.

Comprehensive sexual education is important to ensuring student health. This bill also allows parents to opt students out of their school’s comprehensive sexual education program. Maryland law already requires that parents be given the option to opt their children out of their school’s sexual education program. It is unclear how HB 618 interacts with the state’s current opt-out provisions, and it risks creating confusion for school staff and families.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony, and we urge an unfavorable report. If we can provide any further information, please contact Scott Tiffin at [stiffin@policypartners.net](mailto:stiffin@policypartners.net) or (443) 350-1325.