

**Date:** February 1, 2023

**Bill number:** SB0021

**Committee:** Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

**Bill title:** Criminal Law – Person in a Position of Authority – Sexual Offenses with a Minor

**DHS Position:** **FAVORABLE**

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The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide written support for Senate Bill 21 (SB 21).

DHS serves as the state’s primary social service provider and child protective services are implemented statewide through the Local Department of Social Services (LDSS). Senate Bill 21 would expand the designation of “person in authority” beyond the current definition of individuals working within the educational arena to a broader array of employees or volunteers that children or adolescents interact with on a daily basis. This may include child care facilities; a commercial or nonprofit instruction program for music, dance, art, tutoring, academic enrichment, martial arts or a program with similar purpose; sports, scouting or recreational activity or program; a day or overnight camp; religious institution; and any unit of local, state, or federal government that supervises children.

DHS is committed to providing protection to children and adolescents and believes that the passage of SB 21 would offer additional protections for child victims of sexual offenses and could work to provide additional support to the families served by the LDSS. By expanding these definitions to provide a broader class of person who can be held criminally liable of a fourth degree sexual offense of children served at the LDSS, offenders have a greater chance of being added to the national registry and having their access to children limited. Additionally, Senate Bill 21 may allow the child/adolescent victims to receive services only offered through the criminal justice system (ex., Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program).

The Department is grateful to offer our support for SB 21 and requests a favorable report.

