

SB 447 Written Testimony - Sen. Gile.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Dawn Gile

Position: FAV

DAWN D. GILE
Legislative District 33
Anne Arundel County

Finance Committee

Chair

Anne Arundel County
Senate Delegation



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 3 East
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3568 · 301-858-3568
800-492-7122 Ext. 3568
Dawn.Gile@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB 447

Child Abuse and Neglect – Disclosure of Reports and Records

Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

SB 447 addresses a narrow but serious gap in Maryland law related to the protection of children across the State and in the full range of settings in which they learn, play, and receive care.

Under current law, the Department of Human Services is authorized to disclose an indicated finding of child abuse or neglect to public school systems and nonpublic schools so that appropriate personnel or administrative action can be taken. However, children throughout Maryland do not spend their time exclusively in school settings. They also participate in child care programs, youth sports leagues, recreational programs, and other organizations where adults exercise care, custody, or control over children.

SB 447 expands the circumstances under which the Department of Human Services may disclose an indicated finding of child abuse or neglect to include other organizations with the care and custody of children, so that those entities may take appropriate action to protect the children they serve anywhere in the State.

This bill was introduced at the request of Anne Arundel County Public Schools, based on real-world incidents identified by Sarah Kivett, Director of Investigation and Compliance, who developed this proposal after encountering repeated situations where existing law limited the ability to protect children outside of school settings. While those incidents occurred in Anne Arundel County, the legal gap they exposed exists statewide.

Background

Anne Arundel County Public Schools has experienced several incidents in which DHS made an indicated finding of child abuse or neglect involving an employee or volunteer.

In each case, AACPS took immediate and appropriate action to remove the individual from the school environment.

Despite those actions, the same individual was able to continue having contact with children through other organizations—such as child care programs, youth sports leagues, or similar activities—because current law did not permit DHS to disclose the indicated finding to those organizations.

These circumstances are not unique to one school system or one county. Similar gaps can arise anywhere in Maryland where children are served by multiple organizations that operate independently of one another.

Existing Law

Current Maryland law permits DHS to disclose reports or records concerning child abuse or neglect to school officials and certain specified entities for purposes of carrying out personnel or administrative actions. The law does not permit disclosure to other organizations that provide adult supervision, care, or control of children, even when disclosure would be necessary to protect children from further harm.

What SB 447 Does

SB 447 expands existing disclosure authority to allow DHS to share an indicated finding of child abuse or neglect with administrators or appropriate personnel of organizations that have the care and custody of children throughout Maryland.

The bill:

- Applies statewide and is not limited to any single jurisdiction;
- Allows disclosure only when DHS has made an indicated finding;
- Does not change the standards for making such a finding;
- Does not mandate disclosure in every case; and
- Does not weaken confidentiality protections.

Support

SB 447 is supported by Anne Arundel County Public Schools and Anne Arundel County Government, including the County Executive's Office. These supporters emphasize that

while the bill was requested based on specific incidents, the solution it provides is appropriately statewide in scope.

Closing

SB 447 is a targeted, common-sense update that reflects the reality of children's lives across Maryland. It closes a dangerous gap in current law and helps ensure that children are protected not only in schools, but in every setting where adults are entrusted with their care.

You will also hear today from Sarah Kivett, Director of Investigation and Compliance with Anne Arundel County Public Schools, who developed this proposal and will speak to the circumstances that revealed this statewide issue.

For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 447.

SB447 SUPPORT.pdf

Uploaded by: Grace Wilson

Position: FAV



SB0447 – CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT – DISCLOSURE OF REPORTS AND RECORDS

February 10, 2026

JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS

SUPPORT

Grace Wilson, Director of Legislation & Policy (410.440.1758)

Anne Arundel County Public Schools (AACPS) supports **SB0447 – Child Abuse and Neglect – Disclosure of Reports and Records**. This bill expands the circumstances under which a report or record concerning child abuse or neglect may be disclosed by the Department of Human Services to include: (1) the administrator of a child care center operated by or on behalf of a unit of State or local government or in a state-occupied building; (2) the coach, team administrator, or manager of a youth sports program; and (3) the administrator or other appropriate personnel of any organization that provides adult supervision or care and control of children.

Student safety is of the utmost importance to local school systems. As such, AACPS supports this bill which will contribute to the safety and well-being of students in schools and in the community. Current Maryland law authorizes the Department of Human Services to disclose a report or record concerning child abuse or neglect to the appropriate public school superintendent or the principal or equivalent employee of a nonpublic school to carry out appropriate personnel or administrative actions following a report of suspected child abuse involving a student committed by: (1) a public school employee in that school system; (2) an employee of that nonpublic school; (3) an independent contractor who supervises or works directly with students in that school system or nonpublic school; or (4) an employee of an independent contractor, including a bus driver or bus assistant, who supervises or works directly with students in the school system or that nonpublic school.

AACPS appreciates the intent to this legislation to ensure that, in addition to public school systems and nonpublic schools, other employers with care and control of children are notified of an indicated finding of child abuse or neglect by one of their employees. Timely notification of a suspected abuser potentially working with or around children is paramount to the safety of the children in these programs. Allowing the Department of Human Services to expand this disclosure to include coaches, sports teams, childcare centers, and any other organization that provides supervision of children only improves the safety of AACPS students in our community.

Accordingly, AACPS respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** committee report on SB0447.

SB447

Uploaded by: Stephanie Wolf

Position: FAV



MARYLAND
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

9175 Guilford Road, Ste 300 #1112, Columbia, MD 21046 | 410-992-4258 | www.marylandpsychology.org

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February 6, 2026

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair
Judicial Proceedings Committee
Miller Senate Office Building, 2 East
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB 447 – Child Abuse and Neglect – Disclosure of Reports and Records

Position: SUPPORT

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association, (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral level psychologists throughout the state, asks the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to **report favorably on SB 447.**

The MPA recognizes the profound, wide-ranging, immediate and long-lasting negative effects experienced by children who have suffered abuse and/or been neglected. These include but are not limited to negative impacts on physical development and health (compromised immune systems leading to the development of chronic diseases and a shortened life span), psychological, behavioral, and cognitive well-being (alters brain function by damaging the development of the architecture of the brain), academic performance and achievement, and social relationships, to name a few. They are well documented in a multitude of research. Perhaps the most well-known is the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study conducted by the Center for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente. The results of these studies were released in a widely known and accepted report in 2005.

With this information in mind, it appears that the goal of this legislation is to help ensure that those who have responsibility for overseeing the health and well-being of children are provided with information that can be critical to their mission of fostering the health and well-being of the children in their care or under their supervision. The bill allows for the department of Human Services to disclose information, while providing for the safety of individual's who might be harmed, including the individual making the report, to the administrator of child care facilities, individual's involved in the provision of youth sports programs, and the administrator or another appropriate representative of any organization that provides adult supervision or care of children.

The MPA, recognizes the importance of providing safe and healthy environments in which children can thrive. In some instances, alerting those responsible for the supervision and/or care of children would benefit from knowing that a child in their care/supervision might be experiencing a significant set of stressors affecting many aspects of their life. In those instances, these individuals might then be able to interact with this group of children from a trauma-informed perspective, which could prevent secondary traumatization of this incredibly vulnerable group of children. Additionally, it would allow administrators of these programs to be aware of and take appropriate steps to address an adult staff member who has been involved in the abuse or neglect of children.

The MPA applauds the Committee for its ongoing willingness to consider strengthening support that the community might be able to provide to children facing abuse and/or neglect, therefore, the **Maryland Psychological Association supports SB 447 and urges a favorable Committee Report.**

If we can be of any further assistance as the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D. at mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
President

Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs

Anne Arundel County _FAV_SB447.pdf

Uploaded by: Tom Ni

Position: FAV



February 10, 2026

Senate Bill 447

Child Abuse and Neglect – Disclosure of Reports and Records

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Anne Arundel County **SUPPORTS** Senate Bill 447 – Child Abuse and Neglect – Disclosure of Reports and Records.

This Bill will expand the the circumstances under which a report or record concerning child abuse or neglect may be disclosed by the Department of Human Services (DHS) to (1) the administrator of a child care center operated by or on behalf of a unit of State or local government or in a state-occupied building; (2) the coach, team administrator, or manager of a youth sports program; and (3) the administrator or other appropriate personnel of any organization that provides adult supervision or care and control of children.

The safety of our students and children is paramount. Current Maryland legislation authorizes the DHS to disclose a report or record concerning child abuse or neglect to the appropriate public school superintendent or the principal or equivalent employee of a nonpublic school following a report of suspected child abuse involving a student committed by: (1) a public school employee in that school system; (2) an employee of that nonpublic school; (3) an independent contractor who supervises or works directly with students in that school system or nonpublic school; or (4) an employee of an independent contractor, including a bus driver or bus assistant, who supervises or works directly with students in the school system or that nonpublic school. However, children do not just spend time in our school system. They attend athletic programs, extracurriculars, and other youth activities that contribute to their education, social development, and overall well-being. Timely notifications of any child abuse or neglect is critical in protecting our children at all times. Expanding the disclosure to include coaches, sports teams, childcare centers, and any other organization that provides supervision of children ensures that appropriate personnel or administrative actions can be taken and prevent further abuse or neglect.

For those reasons, Anne Arundel County respectfully requests a **FAVORABLE** report on Senate Bill 447.

SB0447_DHS_INFO.pdf

Uploaded by: Justin Hayes

Position: INFO



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Rafael López, Secretary

February 10, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: TESTIMONY ON SB 447 - CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT – DISCLOSURE OF REPORTS AND RECORDS - POSITION: INFORMATION

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully submits information that may be helpful in its consideration of Senate Bill 447 (SB 447).

With offices in every jurisdiction of Maryland, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. Our Social Services Administration (SSA) is responsible for managing Child Protective Services (CPS), which assists children believed to be neglected or abused by parents or other adults.

SB 447 would permit DHS to disclose records when individuals are alleged to have abused or neglected a child, or are involved in child abuse or neglect investigations. It would authorize records disclosure to state and local government-operated childcare centers, youth sports programs, and organizations responsible for supervising children.

The bill would authorize disclosing investigation records before CPS determines whether child maltreatment occurred. The bill would also authorize DHS to disclose investigation records to certain organizations even when disclosure is not requested.

The federal law only authorizes records disclosure for a statutorily identified legitimate state purpose. Under the [Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act \(CAPTA\)](#) in [42 U.S.C. §5106a\(B\)\(2\)\(b\)\(viii\)](#), a state may not permit disclosure of child protective services records to non-governmental entities unless they are "statutorily

25 S. Charles Street, Baltimore, MD 21201-3500
Tel: 1-800-332-6347 | TTY: 1-800-735-2258 | www.dhs.maryland.gov

authorized by the state to receive such information under a legitimate state purpose." The state has a legitimate purpose in protecting children from abuse or neglect by disclosing records when an investigation results in a finding of abuse or neglect and the individual responsible is screened for a position working directly with children. Currently Maryland [Family Law § 5-714](#) conforms with federal law by limiting the scope of disclosures to records for completed investigations where a person screened for employment working directly with children is found to be responsible for abuse or neglect.

The Committee might consider clarifying language to outline legislative intent, bring the bill into federal compliance with CAPTA, and address confidentiality concerns. Clarification around the disclosure of information will ensure Maryland's continued eligibility for CAPTA funding. Defining a "specified legitimate state purpose" of the disclosure of information would provide clarity around when and to whom records and reports should be disclosed.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide informational testimony to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at justin.hayes1@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Rafael López', written in a cursive style.

Rafael López
Secretary