



THE PRINCE GEORGE'S COUNTY GOVERNMENT

OFFICE OF THE COUNTY EXECUTIVE

BILL: Senate Bill 818 – Residential Treatment Centers and Facilities – Sexual Abuse and Harassment – Reporting and Prevention

SPONSOR: Senator Klausmeier

HEARING DATE: March 11, 2020

COMMITTEE: Finance

CONTACT: Intergovernmental Affairs Office, 301-780-8411

POSITION: SUPPORT

The Office of the Prince George's County Executive **SUPPORTS Senate Bill 818 – 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 (PGCHTTF) was established in 2013 to respond to the growing issue of human trafficking in and around Prince George's County. According to research by Toney-Butler and Mittel (2019), in 2016, an estimated 40.3 million people were victimized through modern-day slavery. One of the mandates of the Task Force is to identify and rescue victims of trafficking. The PGCHTTF coordinates at least 13 government agencies and more than 20 non-profit organizations with a shared goal of providing necessary services for victims, including restoration once recovered from a trafficking situation.

It is well known that between 90-94% of human sex trafficking victims were sexually abused as children. Additionally, the FBI reported that in 2014, more than 52% of all juvenile arrests for commercial sex were minority children. In 2017, the Child

Welfare Information Gateway reported that between 50-90% of child sex trafficking victims have been involved in the child welfare system. To support the trends even further, anecdotal evidence supports that one in four women and one in six men are victims of some form of sexual assault before the age of 18. The Administration for Children and Families produced a report in 2019, stating that at-risk youth have increased vulnerabilities for human trafficking, which include the impact of sexual abuse and other forms of maltreatment, disrupted relationships resulting from child welfare system involvement, and risks associated with runaway episodes.

The proposed bill would be beneficial to children, youth, and adolescents within covered entities (state facilities, forensic residential centers, and residential treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children and adolescents) because it puts the obligations of care and precautions in the hands of the State. Specifically, this Bill will require staff of covered entities to report complaints of sexual abuse and harassment, in addition to implementing a way to respond to those complaints. Further, this Bill would require the creation of protection plans for those victims. SB 818 will enhance the prevention aspect of sexual abuse and harassment, which by extension may 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 Senate Bill 818** and asks for a **FAVORABLE** report.