



SB818 – Residential Treatment Centers and Facilities – Sexual Abuse and Harassment –
Reporting and Prevention
House Judiciary Committee – March 11, 2020
Testimony of Joyce Lombardi, Baltimore Child Abuse Center (410) 396-6147
Position: **SUPPORT**

I am writing in support of SB818 insofar as it will require the reporting and prevention of abuse and harassment in certain residential treatment centers for emotionally disturbed children and adolescents; will require those entities to report certain complaints of sexual abuse and sexual harassment to CPS and law enforcement and will require those facilities to develop policies and procedures to prevent sex abuse and assault. The law apparently codifies what COMAR regulations already require.

Serving as an entity of Lifebridge Health (LBH), Baltimore Child Abuse Center BCAC is Maryland's first accredited children's advocacy center and a chartered member of the National Children's Alliance and the Maryland Children's Alliance. Working in a multidisciplinary team, BCAC provides child abuse victims with forensic interviews, medical treatment, family advocacy, and mental health services.

BCAC has also trained thousands of mandated reporters about their duty to report suspect child abuse or neglect. BCAC also has a free course to train mandated reporters on how to identify, prevent and report child abuse in its Online Training Institute at its website. The site is updated to reflect changes in the law and we also serve as resources on mandatory reporting laws in all 50



Maryland's Resource for
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states. The site is ReportAbuseMd.com and <https://training.reportabusemd.com/> The site was constructed with funding provided by Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention/Children's Justice Act Grant. Baltimore Child Abuse Center is authorized by the Board of Social Work Examiners in Maryland to sponsor social work continuing education programs and this training qualifies for Category II continuing education units.

Mandated reporters are the key to preventing child abuse. Over 60 percent of reports of child abuse come from professionals who work with youth, like mental health, medical educational, police and human service workers, all of whom have a legal duty to report suspected abuse. Mandated reporting is key to preventing abuse. Staff training and policies in youth-serving organizations are key components of preventing and addressing child abuse.

In Maryland, child advocacy centers, Child Protective Services and law enforcement have a statutory duty to investigate allegations of sexual abuse and assault. Md Code, Crim Proc. 11-928. Due to its Congressional authority, Disability Rights Maryland is also able to conduct additional investigations into licensing and other matters related to facilities for children and adults with intellectual and physical disabilities when an allegation of abuse has been made.

To the extent this bill favors the prompt investigation and reporting of child abuse to the proper authorities, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for SB818.