

DATE: March 4, 2020

BILL NUMBER: SB 833 **COMMITTEE:** Judicial Proceedings

BILL TITLE: Adult Protective Services - Vulnerable Adults Registry - Investigations and Records of Abuse and Neglect and Workgroup

DHS POSITION: Support

The Department of Human Services (Department) respectfully offers this letter of support regarding Senate Bill 833 (SB 833). This bill would create a workgroup to study the implementation of a centralized confidential database for vulnerable adults, similar to the registry established by the Family Law Article, under §5-714, as it relates to child abuse and neglect investigations. If this bill passes, it will greatly benefit the clients served under the Department's state-mandated Adult Protective Services (APS) Program, which serves vulnerable adults aged 18 years of age & older through. Presently, there is no central statewide confidential database of adult abuse or neglect.

In March of 2018, the National Adult Protective Services Association (NAPSA) completed a 50 state survey indicating which states currently operate an APS abuse registry. The report noted that 26 states across the country currently operate some form of an APS Abuse Registry or background check system.

Establishing an APS Abuse Registry in Maryland would function as added layer of protection for possible future victims of abuse and neglect. These protections would extend to guardianship cases, as the court would receive notification of an individual's registry status. An APS registry would also increase accountability for the perpetrator's actions, and act as a deterrent to keep perpetrators from further abusing more victims. Through enhanced data collection, the Department would also be able to capture any history of recidivism.

Moreover, employers and community providers who serve vulnerable adults will make more informed decisions before hiring an employee, based on information obtained through a confidential background check. The registry would allow prospective employers to identify employees who have been terminated as a result of abusing or neglecting an individual in a healthcare, nursing home, or assisted living facility.

The Department remains committed to protecting vulnerable adults from abuse or neglect. We look forward to joining the majority of states nationwide, who have successfully implemented an APS registry. As such, the Department respectfully requests a favorable report on SB 833.