



House Judiciary Committee
HB820: Child Abuse and Neglect-Training of Health Care Professionals
Support
February 20, 2020

The Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) is a federally mandated citizen review panel consisting of Governor appointed volunteers representing the 23 counties and Baltimore City. CRBC is charged with examining the policies, practices and procedures of Maryland's child protective services and making recommendations for systemic improvement. CRBC promotes safety and well-being for children and envisions the protection of all children from abuse and neglect; children only being placed in out-of-home placement when necessary; providing families with the help that they need to stay intact.

CRBC supports HB820 because it prescribes the duty to post recommended course for mandated reporter training which an obligation is owned by health care professionals who may encounter suspected victims of abuse or neglect. By bringing awareness to such trainings vital to the child protection pathway, this re-enforces the importance of identifying and making timely reports to the appropriate child protection agency. Health care professionals and educators are likely to encounter youth who are victims of abuse or neglect. According to the Child Maltreatment 2017 report by the Children's Bureau, nationally, professionals accounted for 65.7% of the reports but medical and mental health practitioners accounted for 15.3%. Professionals are more likely to report regarding an infant but report rates dramatically decline from 27.3% to 5.6% by age 13. Maryland saw an increase in first-time victims from 5,174, in 2016, to 5,565 in 2017. CRBC supports requiring boards to post and advertise recommended mandated reporter courses as there is evidence of a national need to ensure the continuum of care follows the youth beyond health care interventions.

HB 820 speaks directly to the governing boards duty to provide and educate licensed professionals i.e. health practitioner, police officer, educator, or human service worker, acting in a professional capacity to be equipped with listings of prescribed reporter training. The window of opportunity for mandated professionals to report is within 48 hours of contact with any youth suspected of being a victim of abuse or neglect. Without proper training, many professionals potentially miss this opportunity. Under HB 820, the boards would be empowered to take proactive actions. The boards would be given a list of recommended courses, from the department, to provide at the time of licensure renewal. Practitioners would be expected to incorporate these trainings into their continuing education courses towards renewal. Whereas, practitioners who are not properly informed and fail to make appropriate reports as mandated reporters could face further adverse action, HB820 authorizes the board to act against any persons under its authority known to have failed to report in violation of § 5-704 of the Family Law Article. This legislation emphasizes the significance for the health care professional to be armed with the most current reporting practice information and supports their responsibility to uphold specific ethical standards in the protection of children.

For this reason we urge a favorable committee report on HB820: Child Abuse and Neglect-Training of Health Care Professionals. Thank you.