

A LIFEBRIDGE HEALTH GROUP

CENTER FOR HOPE

Advancing hope, healing and resilience



HB 009 – Family Law- Mandatory Reporter Training

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee – March 17, 2021

Testimony of Joyce Lombardi, Director of Government Relations and Legal Services, Center for Hope

Position: **SUPPORT**

The Center for Hope supports HB009. The Center for Hope, a subsidiary of Life Bridge, is a comprehensive violence program that addresses violence through the lifespan, and includes child advocacy, domestic violence programs, street violence interruption programs and an elder abuse program

This bill would require the Maryland Department of Human Services to post on its website a free voluntary online course on the identification, prevention, and reporting of child abuse. DHS's website currently has general information on reporting suspected child abuse or neglect. It does not explain the law in detail, nor is it interactive, nor linked to continuing education credit. See <http://dhs.maryland.gov/child-protective-services/reporting-suspected-child-abuse-or-neglect/signs-neglect-abuse/>

Training is 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 reporters.") Mandated reporters need training. They need to help with, e.g. knowing the limits of corporal punishment, what to do if the abuse happened long ago, how to spot human trafficking and how much proof they need to act.

Several in-depth online free training already exist. The Baltimore Child Abuse Center, now a part of LifeBridge Health Center for Hope, for example, 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 states. The site is ReportAbuseMd.com and <https://training.reportabusemd.com/>



Maryland's Resource for
Mandated Reporters

The site was constructed with funding provided by Governor's Office of Crime Control & Prevention/Children's Justice Act Grant from 2014. 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.

For all of the heretofore stated reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB009.

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