

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure the budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and well-being.

House Judiciary Committee

HB 701- Child Abuse and Neglect - Training of Health Care Professionals

Position: SUPPORT

February 11, 2021

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children (CPMC) is a consortium of Maryland organizations and individuals formed in 1996 to promote meaningful welfare reform. House Bill 701 requires the Maryland Department of Health to provide a list of recommended courses on the requirements of mandated reporters to all boards authorized to take action against health care professionals for failure to report suspected abuse, and requires that the boards post this information on their websites, in licensing renewal material, newsletters and other media. While CPMC would prefer legislation that requires the training, we believe this is a positive first step and, therefore, urges a favorable report on HB 701.¹

Maryland law requires anyone who suspects that a child is being abused or neglected to report their suspicions to authorities. Licensed health care professionals are held to a higher standard and face penalties if they knowingly fail to report suspected abuse and neglect. While these professionals may be aware of their requirements to report such suspicions, they may not have adequate training to recognize the signs of abuse and neglect, and how to report those suspicions. HB 701 will promote broader access to training for health care professionals in recognizing abuse and neglect and the proper procedures for fulfilling their legal obligations.

There are more than 50,000 reports of suspected child abuse and neglect in Maryland each year, which is likely an underestimate of actual incidence due to individuals and mandated reporters failing to report their suspicions. Health care professionals are in a critical position to identify and report child abuse and neglect, and HB 701 will help to ensure that they have access to the training they need to increase their understanding of their legal requirements, as well as how to carry out those responsibilities.

We urge a favorable committee report on HB 701.

¹ The following members have signed onto this testimony: Advocates for Children and Youth, Associated Catholic Charities, Board of Childcare, Child Justice, Inc., Citizens Review Board for Children, Court Appointed Special Advocates, The Family Tree, Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Maryland Chapter of the National Association of Social Workers, the State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect.