

A LIFEBRIDGE HEALTH GROUP

CENTER FOR HOPE

Advancing hope, healing and resilience



HB701 – Family Law- Mandatory Reporter Training

House Judiciary Committee – February 11, 2021

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

Position: **SUPPORT**

The Center for Hope supports HB701. 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 Health to provide boards that govern mandated reporters with a list of generally recommended courses relating to the legal obligation to identify and report child abuse and neglect. It would also require those boards to post that information prominently on their websites.

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.”) Our agency, the Baltimore Child Abuse Center, has trained thousands of mandated reporters across the state. We know that mandated reporters need and welcome training. They need help with, e.g. knowing the limits of corporal punishment, if using a belt constitutes child abuse, if sex trafficking can happen without crossing state lines, what to do if the abuse happened long ago, and how much proof they need to act.

The Maryland Board of Dental Examiners is one of the few boards governing mandated reporters that requires periodic training on child abuse (and abuse of vulnerable adults) for its members. After passage of a recent law, training on identifying and reporting child abuse is now mandatory for Maryland teachers and school personnel. Many other professional groups of mandated reporters approach the topic of mandated reporter training on a voluntary basis, sometimes through continuing education. This bill asks simply for a posting of a list of courses.



Maryland's Resource for
Mandated Reporters

Several in-depth online free training courses 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/>

The site was constructed with funding provided by Governor’s Office of Crime Control &

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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 these reasons, we request a **FAVORABLE** report for HB701.

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LifeBridge Health is a regional health system comprising Sinai Hospital of Baltimore, Levindale Geriatric Center and Hospital in Baltimore; Northwest Hospital; Carroll Hospital and Grace Medical Center (formerly Bon Secours).