

HB1214

Favorable

Dr. Frank Arlinghaus

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I ask the members of the committee to return a favorable report on House Bill 1214, the Maryland Child Protection Act of 2022.

As the father of three daughters, I have appeared before this committee in the past expressing concerns about the current law in Maryland, which protects and values abortion more highly than it does my daughters. Current law on abortion interferes in the daughter-parent relationship, in the responsibility parents have for their daughters and their medical decision, and fails to provide adequate protection for minors from abuse in ways that hides it from both parents and authorities.

The protections that exist for almost all other health care decisions involving minors are fought against when it comes to abortion. Speaking before this committee during previous sessions, I noted that there are greater restrictions on ear piercing and far greater restrictions on body piercing than on abortion for minors. I also that when my daughter was a senior in high school and was in pain after her surgery for a torn ACL, she was prohibited by the Howard County School system from self administering over the counter pain relievers at the age of 18, and that any administration of said medication required a parent or a more complicated regimen (and parental permission).

At the same time, if she were still in middle school, she could have obtained an abortion, even having been sexually abused, without either of her parents or appropriate authorities having been notified. She could have been coerced, had the abuse continue, and been bullied into silence, and there would be no record and no legal obligation to report.

HB1214 changes that. It carefully defines terms, and then places requirements on those who have a duty to protect children and a duty to report potential abuse in order to protect those same

children from abuse, including an obligation to act quickly and personally . As someone who has gone through child protection for many different organizations working with children and teenagers, I know how important it can be to follow through on these requirements.

The bill goes further, protecting minors and parental rights and responsibilities to be involved in and/or aware of their children's health care decisions. Section E recognizes that children under 14 who become pregnant are much more likely to have been victims of some sexual crime, and establishes appropriate standards regarding potential evidence of a crime perpetrated against the minor. Importantly it also recognizes that the guardian may be involved as well. Section F further assists parents in protecting their children.

This bill establishes common sense protections for parental involvement in their children's decisions and recognizes that children who are abused at the hands of adults need be protected.

I ask that you return a favorable report on House Bill 1214 for the protection of my daughters and all the young women who stand in harm's way.