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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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**Support SB 820:
Child Abuse and Neglect - Investigations - Timeliness**

Background:

- The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) along with Local Departments of Social Service (LDSS) have had documented issues regarding timeliness of child abuse and neglect investigation reporting.
- The LDSS or local law enforcement must attempt to see the child and decide on the safety of the child within 24 hours after receiving a report of suspected physical or sexual abuse, and within five days after receiving a report of suspected child neglect or mental injury.
- To the extent possible, a child abuse or neglect investigation must be completed within 10 days after receiving the initial notice of suspected abuse or neglect.
- An investigation that is not completed within 30 days must be completed within 60 days of the initial receipt of the first notice of suspected abuse or neglect.

The Issue:

- The Joint Audit and Evaluation Committee (JAEC) has received repeated audit findings over the last five years which has compelled the need for legislation to better understand the issues regarding timeliness of investigation reporting.
- In the June 2019 report, JAEC found that there were numerous LDSS deficiencies related to critical social service administration policies, including child and adult protective services.
- In the [June 2021 report](#), JAEC found that the SSA monitoring processes were not effective for both ensuring timeliness of child abuse and neglect investigations and for required assessments.

What SB 820 Does:

- SB 820 creates an additional layer of oversight and protection for Maryland's most vulnerable children by strengthening reporting requirements for the LDSS.

- SB 820 will require the LDSS that fails to conduct a child abuse or neglect investigation or complete a certain report within the specific statutory time frames to report the delay and the reason for the delay to the supervisor within the local department.
- SB 820 will require the local department to maintain a record of the delay and the reason for the delay in the child's case file that is maintained by the local department.
- SB 820 will require the local department supervisor to review and sign the report.
- SB 820 will require that on or before December 1, 2022, and each subsequent December 1st, the department shall report the Maryland General Assembly on the progress of the local department in complying with the time frames for conducting investigations and completing reports of child abuse and neglect.

What SB 820 Accomplishes:

- SB 820 will highlight inefficiencies within DHS and the LDSS that can be addressed in future legislation and used as leverage for additional funding, resources, and policy solutions.
- SB 820 will ensure that supervisors within LDSS will be made aware of and have greater insight into investigations that fail to meet statutory deadlines.
- SB 820 will mean investigations that are not completed in due time will be escalated to supervisors who can intervene much earlier in the process as they are able.

Amendment:

- In consultation with the Department of Human Services a sponsor amendment has been introduced to "sunset" the bill in 5 years.
- The purpose of the amendment is to affirm that the intent of the bill is not meant to mandate the reporting requirements indefinitely, but rather to give the General Assembly more data to inform their policy proposals in future sessions.