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Judiciary Committee

*Chair*  
Civil Law and Procedure  
Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Re: HB 403

**Juvenile Law – Electronic Harassment and Bullying – Inquiry by Intake Officer**

**Position – Support**

This bill requires the Department of Juvenile Services intake officer to forward a complaint filed by a child who alleges that another child bullied or harassed them using electronic communication devices directly to the State Attorney's office, so long as neither party has previous interaction with the Department of Juvenile Services.

Absent this bill, parents who file a peace order seeking to protect their child from cyberbullying by another child are forced to wait until their case is vetted by the Department of Juvenile Services. Time and again their case falls through the cracks, or no action is taken given the case load of the intake officers at the Department of Juvenile Services.

For your reference I provide the following statistics:

- 9 out of 10 students use social media or gaming apps (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020)
- 80% of students being cyberbullied are being bullied in schools (Hinduja, 2018)
- Targets of cyberbullying are at a greater risk than others of both self-harm and suicidal behaviors (PEW)
- Teens who were cyberbullied shared that it negatively impacted their feelings about themselves (69.1%)
- friendships (31.9%),
- physical health (13.1%),
- schoolwork (6.5%) (Patchin & Hinduja, 2020)
- During Covid-19, there was a 70% increase in hate speech between kids and teens during online chats (Llight, 2020)
- About 50% of LGBTQ+ students experience online harassment (GSLEN, 2020)

- Reports of cyberbullying are highest among middle school students, followed by high school students, and then primary school students (Centers for Disease Control [CDC], 2019)
- Nationwide, 15% of 9th – 12th grade students report being electronically bullied, which was more prevalent for female students than for male (National Center for Education Statistics [NCES])
- Teachers report that cyberbullying is their #1 safety concern in their classrooms according to a recent (Google, 2019)
- Over 60% of students who experience cyberbullying reported that it immensely impacted their ability to learn and feel safe while at school (Hinduja, 2018)
- 10% of students have skipped school at least once in the previous year because of cyberbullying (Hinduja, 2018)
- Research has revealed a link between cyberbullying and low self-esteem, family problems, academic difficulties, school violence, and various delinquent behaviors (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018)
- Students who experienced cyberbullying (both as targets and aggressors) perceived a poorer climate at their school than those who had not experienced cyberbullying (Hinduja & Patchin, 2018)
- 42% of teens say they have been called offensive names online or via their cellphone.
- 32% of teens say someone has spread false rumors about them on the internet, have been the target of physical threats online (16%) (Pew Research Center)
- 80% of students being cyberbullied are being bullied in schools (Hinduja, 2018)
- 59% of U.S. teens have been bullied or harassed online and agree cyberbullying is a major problem for people their age (Pew Research Center, 2018)
- 79% of teens say elected officials are doing only a fair or poor job of addressing cyberbullying (Pew Research Center, 2018)
- About 6 in 10 parents worry about their own teen getting bullied online, but most are confident they can teach their teen about acceptable online behavior (Pew Research Center, 2018)
- The vast majority of teens (90%) believe online harassment is a problem that affects people their age and 63% say this is a major problem (Pew Research Center, 2018)
- 24% of teens whose household income is less than \$30,000 a year say they have been the target of physical threats online, compared with 12% whose annual household income is \$75,000 or more (Pew Research Center, 2018)
- 81% of youth said that others cyberbully because they think it is funny (National Crime Prevention Council, 2017)
- Nearly 20% of teens had a cyberbully pretend to be someone else in order to trick them online, getting them to reveal personal information (National Crime Prevention Council, 2017)
- Nearly 30% of teens wanted to seek revenge on those who cyberbullied them (National Crime Prevention Council, 2017)
- 34% of youth reported being cyberbullied in their lifetime, and bullying has been cited as a contributing factor in cases of extreme retaliation, including school shootings (Hinduja & Patchin, 2016)
- 23% of students who reported being cyberbullied notified an adult at school about the incident (NCES, 2016)

The statistics, frequency and number of cyberbullying incidents necessitating a peace order is alarming. I urge this committee to favorably report HB 403.