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Rules and Executive
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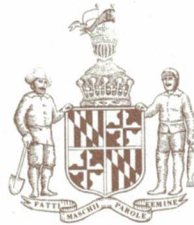
Joint Committees

Administrative, Executive,
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Support for HB 937 – Child Abuse and Neglect – Reports and Records - Disclosure

HB 937 provides transparency when there is a fatality or near fatality of a child in the control and care of the local department of social services or the Secretary of Human Services; the transparency, upon request, requires the disclosure within thirty days, information concerning child abuse or neglect if the child was: (1) under the custody of a local or State department or agency, or in the care of a foster parent; (2) is the subject of an investigation, report, referral, or a complaint received by a local/State department or agency; and (3) has suffered a fatality or near fatality.

After the request for disclosure, the Secretary of Human Services must promptly notify the State's Attorney's Office. The State's Attorney's Office has thirty days to redact from public disclosure any information that would seriously hinder the State's Attorney's office to prosecute a criminal case. Indeed, the State's Attorney's office is concerned about providing and protecting the integrity of their cases. Importantly, this bill has the support of the Maryland State's Attorneys' Association.

A member of my panel consists of a child welfare law attorney of nearly 25 years, a practitioner and former director of the Georgia Division of Family and Children Services. He has important points as to why this bill needs to be in Maryland Statute. Currently our Human Services Article fails to comply with federal statute. His knowledge, training and experience is invaluable in working toward accountability in the care and protection of our children.

Ultimately HB 937 is a step toward promoting the transparency needed to inform the public and thus support accountability within the Maryland child protection system. I will leave you with what a young man in the system said in a juvenile hearing years

ago. In a very dejected and sad voice, "I am a ward of the system." In serious situations when the natural parents are unable to care for their children and the State undertakes that responsibility, it is important for the State to make sure the children are protected and cared for by the State's guardians. This bill at least provides some level of transparency and accountability by those entrusted to care for our most assets,

Please Issue a Favorable Report for HB 937

A handwritten signature in blue ink, reading "Susan H. McGowan". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial 'S' and a distinct 'H'.