

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.



**HB1480: Health – Child Advocacy Centers –
Continuity of Care Standards for Health Care Professionals and
Reports of Violations
Senate Judicial Proceedings
April 1, 2025**

POSITION: Oppose

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children (CPMC) is a consortium of organizations and individuals dedicated to the well-being of Maryland's most vulnerable children. Since 1992, we have worked collaboratively to promote meaningful child welfare reform. **CPMC urges an unfavorable report on HB1480** — Health – Child Advocacy Centers – Continuity of Care Standards for Health Care Professionals and Reports of Violations.¹

Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) are designed to provide a coordinated, child-focused response to allegations of abuse. Each center operates using a multi-disciplinary team that includes professionals from law enforcement, child protective services, medical and mental health services, and prosecutors.

However, CACs vary significantly across the state, adapting to the needs and resources of their respective communities. Many lack the financial means to employ in-house mental health providers, relying instead on partnerships with community-based professionals. CPMC believes that the bill imposes a one-size-fits-all mandate on CACs without regard for their diverse structures, resources, and community needs. The origins of HB1480 stem from an isolated incident in which a CAC, with the funds to employ its own mental health staff, terminated its providers five years ago for unknown reasons. Instead of addressing that specific case, HB1480 seeks to impose unnecessary regulations on the CACs serving all 24 jurisdictions across Maryland, disregarding the flexibility CACs need to serve children effectively in their own communities.

Key concerns with HB1480 include:

¹ Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include Catholic Charities of Baltimore, Center for Hope, Child Justice, Court Appointed Special Advocates (MD CASA), Court Appointed Special Advocates (Baltimore County), Everstand, MD Chapter - American Academy of Pediatrics, Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), Maryland Children's Alliance, Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA), and National Association of Social Workers – MD.

Redundant Licensing Requirements: The bill mandates that health care providers be “licensed or certified and provide services within the scope of licensure or certification.” Maryland law already requires this, making the provision unnecessary.

Unrealistic and Unfair Continuity of Care Standards: Ethical guidelines already ensure that licensed professionals maintain continuity plans for patient care. However, HB1480 would require that mental health professionals working with CACs provide contact information for previous therapists—a requirement found nowhere else in Maryland law. This unrealistic expectation effectively forces therapists into an indefinite commitment to former clients.

Risk to Child Safety: Alarming, the bill fails to consider the risk to children if sensitive information, including previous therapists’ contact details, falls into the hands of offending parents. Disclosure of such information could jeopardize the safety and confidentiality of children receiving services as well as the previous therapist.

Unjust Burden on CACs and Community Partners: HB1480 forces community partners working with CACs not only to report changes in therapists, but to include details for contacting the previous therapist. Without regard to the circumstances surrounding the change in therapist, the previous therapist must also be allowed to contact their former client. These nonsensical expectations are imposed on no other mental health providers nor the organizations that employ them.

The Maryland Children’s Alliance (MCA) is the statewide organization statutorily responsible for establishing standards of care for Maryland CACs. MCA is currently establishing standards of care which will be in effect beginning in FY2026. This process ensures that every child across the state will have access to research-based and trauma-informed care regardless of the jurisdiction of residence. MCA is a nationally accredited chapter by the National Children’s Alliance as are the majority of CACs. We have been informed that all 24 CACs in Maryland will be accredited by next year.

The provisions in HB1480 do not enhance child protection but instead undermine CACs’ ability to serve their communities effectively. In the last five years, Maryland child advocacy centers have served over 26,000 children, receiving only two complaints with no wrongdoing found of the centers in question. For these reasons, we urge an **unfavorable report on HB1480** — Health – Child Advocacy Centers – Continuity of Care Standards for Health Care Professionals and Reports of Violations.