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Judiciary Committee

Chair
Civil Law and Procedure
Subcommittee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB1480

**Child Advocacy Centers - Continuity of Care Standards for Health
Care Professionals and Reports of Violations**

Support

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and esteemed members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

For the record, my name is Jon Cardin and thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 1480. This bill would establish oversight standards for Maryland's Child Advocacy Centers (CACs) to help provide a safety net for some of our most vulnerable children.

Maryland has 24 Child Advocacy Centers, which provide critical services for children who have experienced abuse or neglect. Despite receiving significant state funding through the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP), these centers currently lack specific oversight or accountability mechanisms.

This bill, which passed unanimously out of committee and the House, is the result of extensive work by an interim workgroup, including the HGO Committee, representatives from DHS, and the Child Advocacy Centers. The bill follows a model similar to how nursing homes are regulated, with employees having their own licensing boards and oversight, but also an additional layer of oversight of the actual Centers via a state agency.

As passed out of the House, the bill requires GOCPP to collect complaints against the centers and produce an annual report. If complaints need further investigation, the bill gives GOCPP the authority to refer them to the Attorney General for further review.

I would also like to thank my colleagues on the Appropriations Committee for their thoughtful collaboration with CAC advocates. They helped address concerns, especially around the reporting mechanisms.

Originally, the bill had reporting through DHS, but now it is streamlined through GOCPP, aligning with the centers' funding source. Another key concern was whether CACs would have sufficient knowledge of wrongdoing. To address this, the bill now applies specifically to individuals employed by the CACs, ensuring that the centers can be held accountable for their staff's actions.

Overall, the bill incorporates meaningful input from CACs while adding important accountability measures to ensure these centers continue their vital work for Maryland's children. This is a necessary step to ensure the care these children receive remains at the high standard the CACs already maintain and it can prevent further harm to these children.

I respectfully request a favorable report on HB 1480. Thank you.