

## 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.*



### **HB950 – Child Abuse and Neglect – Disclosure of Reports and Records House Judiciary Committee February 20, 2025**

#### **Position: SUPPORT with AMMENDMENT**

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1996 who are concerned about the care of Maryland's most vulnerable children and work together to promote meaningful child welfare reform. **CPMC urges a favorable with amendment report on HB950 - Child Abuse and Neglect – Disclosure of Reports and Records.**<sup>1</sup>

HB950 would expand the circumstances under which a report or record concerning child abuse or neglect may be disclosed by the Department of Human Services to include the administrator of a certain childcare center; the coach, team administrator, or manager of a youth sports program; and the administrator or other appropriate personnel of any organization that provides adult supervision or care and control of children. The administrator of a childcare center, youth sports program, or other youth-serving organization would be notified following a report of suspected child abuse involving one of their employees.

Children and youth are better protected by educating adults on how to create safe environments and prevent child sexual abuse, carefully monitor those who work with children, and conduct thorough background checks of adults who work with children and youth. Youth-serving organizations, including childcare centers and youth sports programs, need to know if an employee is being investigated for suspected child abuse or neglect in order for the organization to determine the suitability of the individual for employment. The organization needs to be able to make informed and appropriate personnel or administrative actions following a report of suspected child abuse. Youth-serving organizations must be able to assess the situation as early and as fully as possible. It must be determined if an adult has clear boundaries and ethical standards when working with children and youth.

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<sup>1</sup> Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include Catholic Charities of Baltimore, Center for Hope, Citizens Review Board for Children, Court Appointed Special Advocates (MD CASA), Court Appointed Special Advocates (Baltimore County), Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), Maryland Children's Alliance, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, and National Association of Social Workers – MD.

Some of the most infamous cases of child abuse have taken place at youth-serving organizations. If we hope to prevent child abuse and create the safest environments for children, we need to engage youth-serving organizations as leaders in the prevention effort, help them become places where child abuse offenders cannot work, and practice policies at every level that better protect children in their care.

However, CPMC respectfully asks that **HB950 be amended to exclude coaches** from receiving a report or record concerning child abuse regarding an employee. We believe an administrator at a more senior level position in the youth sports program should receive such a report. It is important that whoever receives a report or record of child abuse knows how to appropriately respond and handle the information given. The report must be responded to promptly and with discretion.

It is for these reasons that the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children **urges a favorable report with amendment** on HB950 - Child Abuse and Neglect – Disclosure of Reports and Records.