



Maryland Municipal League
The Association of Maryland's Cities and Towns

TESTIMONY

February 13, 2025

Committee: House Judiciary

Bill: HB 456 - Civil Actions - Child Nonsexual Abuse and Neglect - Damages and Statute of Limitations

Position: Letter of Information

Reason for Position:

While the Maryland Municipal League (MML) has no official position on HB 670, we submit these observations for the Committee's consideration as it continues work on this important policy.

As this Committee is aware, Maryland has a special statute of limitations for child sexual abuse, but nonsexual abuse claims generally fall under the standard 3-year limitation from the date the abuse occurred, which can be extended if the plaintiff was a minor at the time of the abuse. If the alleged victim was under 18 at the time of the abuse, the statute of limitations is typically 3 years after the victim turns 18. This bill would increase that timeframe to 20 years after the alleged victim turns 18, or 3 years after a defendant is convicted of a crime related to the incident, whichever is later. Extending the statute of limitations exposes municipalities to additional lawsuits related to allegations of child abuse that occurred in the past. As a result, municipalities could face an increased financial burden in the form of legal fees, settlements, and damages.

This proposal increases the cap for damages from \$400,000 to \$890,000. This is a significant increase, especially for smaller municipalities. Municipal insurance premiums would likely increase as a result.

However, employees and agents of Maryland's municipalities typically have limited direct interaction with minors, primarily within parks and recreation programs, which are not universally available. As a result, our actual exposure and potential liability are difficult to assess. While the risk exists, it may be minimal.

We understand friendly amendments are forthcoming that address these points. The League appreciates the goal of this legislation and the Sponsor's collaboration, and we look forward to continuing to work with this Committee. Thank you for your consideration.

For more information, please contact Angelica Bailey Thupari, Director of Advocacy and Public Affairs, at angelicab@mdmunicipal.org or (443) 756-0071.

The Maryland Municipal League uses its collective voice to advocate, empower and protect the interests of our 160 local governments members and elevates local leadership, delivers impactful solutions for our communities, and builds an inclusive culture for the 2 million Marylanders we serve.