

SB685.pdf

Uploaded by: Ashley Wartell

Position: FAV

I have two children at Severna Park Elementary school, and my daughter was the student of a teacher who was investigated, charged, and later acquitted of dozens of sexual abuse charges. When the school was first notified about the first child victim, the teacher was immediately put on leave, and I didn't think anything of it. A few weeks later, however, a parent discovered another child had written to a friend alluding to also being sexually abused.

I received a phone call from another mom telling me that there was an investigation underway for sexual abuse and that I needed to ask my daughter what she had experienced in his classroom. Over the next several days, I learned of at least six children, whom I know personally, who had to make reports to CPS, as well as many, many others beyond our friend circle and in other grades. To say the least, it was a traumatic experience to try to navigate for the entire community.

Some parents got together and took it upon themselves to organize two events – one with a local therapeutic provider in our community and another with a child sexual abuse advocacy organization, based in Baltimore. Both sessions were incredibly useful, and we learned how to talk about the subject with an 8 year old, what types of therapeutic treatments are most beneficial, as well as how the criminal legal process works. There is a real tension between managing the therapeutic response, which is an urgent and immediate need, and the criminal response, which is a years long process.

To advertise these sessions, the parents had to self organize, gather up email addresses, and depend on word of mouth. We were not allowed to work with the school, or even the PTO, to educate ourselves on this topic.

Unfortunately for our community, working with the school felt like an adversarial experience, because their policies and procedures forbid them from saying anything about anything – nothing about the nature of the allegation, nothing that my daughter may have been in real danger in her 3rd grade classroom, and nothing for families about how to deal with the situation to move forward in the context of sexual abuse. Although I understand and support the need to protect the rights of the accused, this cannot supersede ensuring the safety and well-being of our children and families.

Please vote in support of SB 685, so that schools and communities have better tools, resources, and support to respond to these types of tragic events in the future.

SB 685, Local School Systems, Sexual Abuse and Sex

Uploaded by: Carlos Orbe, Jr.

Position: FAV

March 2, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman

Chair, Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

2 West Miller Senate Office Building

11 Bladen Street

Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Support for SB 685, Local School Systems, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct, Response Policy and After Action Review

Dear Chair Feldman,

Maryland Latinos Unidos (MLU) is honored to express our strong support for Senate Bill 685, Local School Systems, Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct, Response Policy and After Action Review. This legislation requires the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a model response policy with required components, requires local school systems to adopt a response policy by July 1, 2027, and requires notices and after action reviews under specified circumstances.

Students deserve schools where safety is proactive, trauma informed, and consistent across jurisdictions. A model policy provides statewide clarity on reporting, coordination, communication with families, and the responsibilities of staff when allegations arise. After action reviews add a crucial layer of learning and accountability so that systems improve rather than repeating failures.

Child sexual abuse is a serious public health issue with lifelong impacts on mental health, educational attainment, and physical wellbeing. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention documents child sexual abuse as a form of child abuse with significant adverse consequences. Policies that standardize prevention and response are a necessary part of reducing harm, supporting survivors, and ensuring that schools act swiftly and appropriately.

This bill is particularly important for Latino and immigrant families navigating language barriers and unequal access to legal and mental health resources. Maryland's Hispanic or Latino residents make up 13.3 percent of the state population, and 16.6 percent of residents are foreign born. When families do not receive clear notices in a language they understand, or do not know their rights and options, misconduct can go unreported and support can be delayed. SB 685's emphasis on notice and structured review moves Maryland toward a system where every family receives timely information and every incident triggers improvement.

Implications for Latino and immigrant Marylanders include stronger confidence that schools will respond consistently, clearer pathways to culturally competent supports, and a greater likelihood

that survivors and families can access services without stigma or confusion. Strong policy also protects staff by clarifying roles, expectations, and training needs.

MLU urges the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee to issue a favorable report on SB 685, ensuring Maryland school systems respond to sexual abuse and sexual misconduct with urgency, transparency, and accountability.

Sincerely,

Carlos Orbe, Jr.
Communications and Public Affairs Specialist
Maryland Latinos Unidos
corbejr@mdlatinosunidos.org

SB0685 Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sex

Uploaded by: Cecilia Plante

Position: FAV



TESTIMONY FOR SB0685 – Local School Systems – Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct – Response Policy and After-Action Review – FAVORABLE

Bill Sponsor: Senator Gile

Committee: Education, Energy, and the Environment

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of SB0685 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations representing more than 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district. Our mission is grounded in the belief that government must safeguard the lives, health, and dignity of all Marylanders, especially children, who rely on schools and trusted adults to ensure their safety.

SB0685 advances that mission by strengthening Maryland’s response to sexual abuse and sexual misconduct within local school systems.

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a model sexual abuse and sexual misconduct response policy that includes specific, essential components. It further requires each local school system to adopt its own response policy by July 1, 2027, and to provide required notices and conduct after-action reviews when incidents occur. These measures create a consistent, statewide framework for prevention, reporting, and accountability.

These protections are urgently needed.

Schools are among the most important environments in a child’s life. When sexual abuse or misconduct occurs, or when warning signs are missed, the harm is profound and lasting. Yet Maryland currently lacks a uniform, statewide standard for how school systems must respond. This leads to inconsistent practices, uneven protections, and gaps that can leave children vulnerable.

SB0685 addresses these gaps by ensuring:

- Clear, consistent response protocols across all 24 local school systems.
- Mandatory notices so that families and appropriate authorities are informed promptly.
- After-action reviews that identify failures, strengthen future responses, and prevent repeated harm.
- A statewide model policy, ensuring that every district meets a baseline standard of safety and accountability.

The bill also acknowledges that local school systems will need time and support to implement these requirements, which is why the adoption deadline of July 1, 2027, is both reasonable and necessary. This approach balances urgency with practicality, ensuring that systems can build strong, sustainable policies.

SB0685 aligns squarely with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It strengthens child protection, promotes transparency, and ensures that Maryland's public schools uphold the highest standards of safety. **No child should ever be placed in a school environment where sexual abuse or misconduct is mishandled, minimized, or ignored.**

We respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on SB0685.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica Gorski
Executive Committee
Maryland Legislative Coalition

SB 685 Written Testimony - Sen. Gile.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Dawn Gile

Position: FAV

DAWN D. GILE
Legislative District 33
Anne Arundel County

Finance Committee

Chair

Anne Arundel County
Senate Delegation



Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Suite 3 East
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3568 · 301-858-3568
800-492-7122 Ext. 3568
Dawn.Gile@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Testimony in Support of SB 685

Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct - Response Policy and After-Action Review

Mr. Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and Members of the EEE Committee:

This legislation was born out of a deeply painful and personal experience in my community involving allegations of sexual misconduct at Severna Park Elementary School. My own children attend that school. The families most directly affected are my neighbors and friends.

I want to be very clear at the outset about what this bill does — and what it does not do.

SB 685 does not relitigate any case. It does not question the outcome of criminal proceedings. It does not assign blame to any individual or to Anne Arundel County Public Schools. Our educators work tirelessly for children every single day. This bill is not about second-guessing dedicated professionals.

What it does address is something more structural.

When credible allegations arise, Maryland currently does not have consistent, statewide minimum standards governing how local school systems respond. Policies vary from county to county. Timelines vary. Notification practices vary. Record retention practices vary. In moments of crisis, that lack of uniformity can compound fear, confusion, and mistrust.

SB 685 is about closing that gap.

First, the bill directs the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a model sexual abuse and sexual misconduct response policy. Each local school system must adopt a policy aligned with that model by July 1, 2027. This creates a clear statewide floor — not a ceiling — ensuring that every child in Maryland is protected by the same minimum standards, while preserving local flexibility to go further if appropriate.

Second, the bill defines what constitutes a “credible allegation.” That definition matters. It requires that the report be specific and plausible and sufficient to warrant protective action. This

ensures that schools act promptly when action is warranted, while also safeguarding employee privacy and due process when allegations are not credible or involve unrelated personnel matters.

Third, SB 685 establishes clear and consistent parent notification standards. When a credible allegation is received, parents must be notified as soon as feasible, and no later than three school days in cases involving alleged child abuse by an employee, unless law enforcement or Child Protective Services requests a delay. The notice must confirm that a credible allegation has been received, indicate whether the employee has been removed from student contact, describe safety measures in place, and provide information about counseling and support resources. At the same time, the employee's name may not be disclosed during an active investigation. That balance is intentional. Transparency and investigative integrity must coexist.

The bill also requires that school systems create a public webpage focused on ensuring families have immediate access to support resources. That webpage must prominently provide information about available counseling services, mental health supports, crisis hotlines, and community-based resources for students and families. In moments of trauma or uncertainty, access to qualified trauma-informed counselors and clear pathways to support can be just as important as procedural updates. Rather than allowing families to search for help on their own during a stressful time, this provision ensures that schools proactively connect parents and students with the services they may need.

Another key lesson from the Severna Park case involved record retention. We learned that electronic communications were subject to automatic deletion under varying local policies. In that instance, a 30-day deletion cycle eliminated emails that could have provided important context. SB 685 requires a minimum three-year retention period for electronic records related to credible allegations. This preserves investigatory integrity, aligns with Maryland's removal of statutes of limitations for child sexual abuse, and ensures that law enforcement and civil processes have access to necessary documentation.

Finally, the bill requires a structured after-action review within 45 days of the conclusion of a serious incident. That review examines how the incident occurred, systemic and environmental factors, gaps in supervision or communication, the timeliness of parent notification, and coordination with law enforcement and Child Protective Services. The purpose is not punishment. It is institutional learning. It ensures that difficult experiences lead to documented improvement rather than a quiet return to normal.

At its core, SB 685 is about consistency, transparency, evidence preservation, and institutional accountability. It establishes statewide minimum standards while respecting local governance and due process protections.

This bill reflects months of consultation with families, educators, state agencies, criminal justice professionals, and policy experts. It is measured. It is balanced. And it responds to a clear gap in our current framework.

For those reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on SB 685.

Senate Testimony SB 685.pdf

Uploaded by: Jane Valentino

Position: FAV

Mr. Chair, Madam Vice-Chair, and members of the Committee:

My name is Jane Valentino, and I am a constituent writing in strong support of SB 685.

I support this bill because I have lived through the consequences of silence and uncertainty when credible allegations of sexual abuse surfaced in my children's elementary school.

I am the mother of three children who attended Severna Park Elementary School. In March of 2024, I began hearing from other parents that a teacher—someone who had taught two of my sons—would be out of the school indefinitely with no explanation. Like many parents, I assumed he or his family were facing a personal hardship. Text messages circulated about how we could support him.

Three weeks later, I was sitting on the sidelines at my son's soccer game when another parent told me that this same teacher had allegedly molested multiple students.

The shock is hard to describe. I remember trying to hold back tears while watching my son play, my heart pounding as my mind raced. I knew I had need to talk to my son - to ask if he had experienced or witnessed any abuse.

How do you even begin that conversation? How do you ask your child if something terrible has happened to them—without leading them, frightening them, or confusing them? I felt completely unprepared and utterly alone in that moment. I did not know if this was rumor or reality, or even whether it was something I should raise with my child. On the ride home, I carefully asked a few neutral questions. My son seemed surprised and confused. I wanted to believe it was all rumor.

The second my son got out of the car, I called a close friend whose daughter had been in this teacher's class. She answered the phone sobbing. When she had approached her daughters, one responded like my son. The other reacted with intense emotion and distress. My friend was frantic. She did not know where to turn, who to call, or how to navigate what might be unfolding.

That same weekend, I had to speak with my other son. I knew there was no way to delay the conversation—children talk. I wanted my sons to hear from me before hearing about this from classmates. I had less than 48 hours to prepare for one of the most difficult conversations a parent can face - without guidance, without resources, and without clear information from the school.

That Monday, one of my sons came home visibly shaken. Eventually, he told me he had learned at school that two of his friends' sisters were victims. As a parent, there is no way to prepare you for explaining to your child that one of his favorite teachers is accused of harming children he knows.

In the weeks that followed, many of us hoped for clear information and resources to help families navigate these conversations and support our children. The guidance did not come.

SB 685 would change that.

This bill ensures that when credible allegations of sexual abuse arise, parents are informed directly and transparently by the school system. It would prevent families from learning life-altering information through rumor. It provides clarity in moments when uncertainty compounds trauma.

Most importantly, it would empower parents to protect and support their children with accurate information, rather than speculation and fear.

Silence does not protect children. Transparency does.

No parent should have to scramble in panic, unsure whether they are responding to gossip or to a serious threat. No child should learn about allegations of abuse through hallway whispers before their parents have the chance to guide them.

SB 685 is about communication, consistency, and putting children first. It ensures that families are treated as partners in safeguarding students—not as bystanders left in the dark.

I urge you to give SB 685 a favorable report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Jane Valentino

SB 685 Testimony-Kraft.pdf

Uploaded by: Jennifer Kraft

Position: FAV

Mr. Chair, Madam Vice-Chair, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Jennifer Kraft, and I am writing in support of Senator Gile's Senate Bill 685.

I am the mother of twin boys who were students of the third-grade teacher involved in the 2023 sexual abuse allegation at Severna Park Elementary School. In March of that year, I received an email stating that their teacher would be out of school indefinitely for personal reasons. Later, through another parent, I learned that he had been removed due to allegations of sexual abuse involving his students.

I was instantly overwhelmed by a range of emotions: shock and disbelief that I did not know the real reason he was gone, panic that my children might be affected, and confusion, frustration, and anger at the lack of information. I had so many unanswered questions, and I had no idea how to respond to the questions from my boys or where to turn for help. I reached out to the school, hoping for clarity, but quickly realized that they would not be able to provide the answers or guidance I needed.

The days that followed were filled with the same emotions as I navigated this new territory. No one was prepared for the firestorm that followed—not the students, not the teachers, not the parents, and not the administrators. What families experienced was a lack of transparency, communication, and accountability.

When I first read Senate Bill 685, my initial feeling was relief.

It was a relief to see legislation that thoughtfully and thoroughly acknowledges and addresses the issues that families faced during that time. We prepare our schools for emergencies like fires and lockdowns. This incident was also an emergency—one that required a plan with clarity, structure, and communication.

Senate Bill 685 provides families and schools with a consistent framework to navigate these emergencies. It addresses the questions that flooded my mind in those first moments of panic. It also goes further by requiring an after-action review—asking not only what happened, but how it happened and how it can be prevented in the future.

This bill aligns schools and families as partners in protecting children. It provides parents with the knowledge and resources necessary to navigate extraordinarily difficult situations with confidence instead of fear.

It is still hard for me to think about those days in 2023. But it is reassuring to know that future families do not have to experience the same silence and uncertainty as I did.

I respectfully urge you to vote yes on Senate Bill 685 and provide that relief to other families across Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Kraft

Testimony_KJ_SB685.pdf

Uploaded by: Katherine Juhasz

Position: FAV

Mr. Chair, Madame Vice-Chair, and members of the Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee:

My name is Katherine Juhasz and I am testifying in support of Senate Bill (SB) 685.

In 2024, on an otherwise unremarkable day, I received an email from my children's elementary school that one of my daughter's teachers would be indefinitely out of the classroom and a long-term substitute would be in place. No one knew anything about the details of why the teacher would be unavailable until a few weeks later, when the news that the teacher had been removed due to credible allegations of sexual assault spread like wildfire through our community. Panicked parents were scrambling for information on a Friday afternoon, desperate for support and guidance about how this news would affect their children. Over the weekend, parents reassured one another that surely the school would release an update on Monday morning.

Unfortunately, that update never came. Parents were left in the dark about how to speak with their children, what support or resources might be available to help their families, and how to discuss the circumstances with other parents within the school who were not even aware that allegations had been made. The lack of readily available information made a horrific situation worse, traumatizing our entire community and eroding trust between families and the school. As time went on, resources were shared from parent to parent, including lists of reputable trauma-informed therapists, evidence-informed guides for how to broach difficult topics like child abuse with your children, and what to do if a child discloses abuse. These resources could have been shared much more quickly and efficiently if they had been distributed en masse and publicly instead of being limited to word of mouth.

SB 685 is the road map we desperately needed. Had this bill been in place, it would have made a significant difference for my family and that of so many others. In the event of credible allegations, communicating clear, timely information about what steps are being taken and which resources are available is essential and should not vary from one family to the next or even one school to the next. Every parent should have access to the same resources, so that they can best support their children. Clear information reduces the spread of misinformation and the fear that comes from not knowing where things stand. Mandating an after-action report, to review what was done well and what could be done better in the future, ensures that the system continues to improve and is aligned with the Maryland State Board of Education's mission to advocate for continuous improvement of Maryland's educational system.

I was unaware that our elementary school had a 30-day automatic email deletion cycle until I reviewed this bill. I am astounded by the fact that this was in place, and hopeful that SB 685 passes to ensure that communications are retained in order to allow for thorough review in the event of future allegations. SB 685 prioritizes system-wide transparency and support, which were the two things most lacking in our community in the aftermath of the allegations.

I fervently hope that you will support SB 685, thereby voicing your support for our children and their wellbeing.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely,

Katherine Juhasz

Senate Bill 685.pdf

Uploaded by: Meghann Boosinger

Position: FAV

Dear Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and Members of the Committee:

My name is Meghann Boosinger and I am writing today in support of SB 685.

As I wrote in an email to the Maryland State Board of Education on September 4, 2024, *“I would love to see a process in place for if this ever happens again. Parents need to be informed and supported...we need access to resources and help.”* I am providing this written testimony to demonstrate my commitment through action and support Dawn Gile’s Senate Bill 685 to instill that change.

While I support the bill in its entirety, two provisions are especially meaningful to me: ensuring transparency and access to resources for parents following a credible allegation of sexual abuse, and strengthening record retention policies.

My son was a student in one of the third grade classrooms when a teacher was accused of sexual abuse at Severna Park Elementary School. From the time of the first accusation, it was three weeks before the school notified any parents; and four more weeks after that before any mental health resources were provided. Before I heard from the school, I heard about it from another parent. Within hours, text messages and emails were circulating with information—some accurate, others not. Fear and confusion spread rapidly throughout our community.

As a parent, my first instinct was to protect my child and ensure he was safe. Yet I was faced with an unimaginable task: how do you ask a nine-year-old boy questions about something so serious? How do you help him process information that even adults struggle to comprehend?

In the weeks that followed, those conversations at home became increasingly difficult. My son questioned whether the adults he trusted were safe. He expressed guilt for not having protected his classmates. He came into our room at night with questions no child should have to ask.

Importantly, those conversations were necessary regardless of how the legal case ultimately concluded. Providing parents with timely information and access to counseling resources is not a presumption of guilt, nor is it a judgment about the accused. It is an acknowledgment that when a teacher is removed under serious allegations, children are impacted immediately. Parents need guidance. We need evidence-based resources. We need clarity within appropriate legal boundaries. Due process is fundamental—but so is the emotional well-being of the students sitting in those classrooms.

Senate Bill 685 ensures that, if this ever occurs again, families will not be left to navigate fear and uncertainty alone.

I was also deeply troubled to learn during the investigation that the school district maintains a policy of deleting emails after 30 days. In cases involving serious allegations, the burden of proof is already significant. The failure to retain email correspondence risks the deletion of essential documentation and compromises transparency, accountability, and organizational memory. Email correspondence often reflects key decisions regarding personnel and student safety. Automatically erasing those records after such a brief period can impede investigations and hinder the legal process.

Thoughtful record retention policies—ones that balance responsible storage management with legal and ethical obligations—better protect students, families, school employees, and the broader community. Senate Bill 685 would help ensure that such protections are in place.

I respectfully urge you to support this legislation.

Sincerely,

Meghann Boosinger

Testimony in support of SB0685 - Sexual Abuse and

Uploaded by: Richard KAP Kaplowitz

Position: FAV

SB0685_RichardKaplowitz_FAV

03/04/2026

Richard Keith Kaplowitz

Frederick, MD 21703

TESTIMONY ON SB#0685- POSITION: FAVORABLE

Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct - Response Policy and After-Action Review

TO: Chair Feldman, Vice Chair Kagan, and members of the Education, Energy and the Environment Committee

FROM: Richard Keith Kaplowitz

My name is Richard Keith Kaplowitz. I am a resident of District 3, Frederick County. I am submitting this testimony in support of SB#0685, **Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct - Response Policy and After-Action Review**

“Schools are supposed to be safe spaces. For many children, they are where friendships are built, lessons are learned, and futures are shaped. But for survivors of school-related sexual abuse, the classroom became a place of betrayal and trauma. When a teacher, coach, principal, or staff member uses their position of power to harm a student, the impact can last a lifetime.”¹

In recent years, schools across Maryland have been embroiled in sex abuse scandals. Through investigations, public record releases, and legal filings, it is clear that these and other schools across the state have struggled with pervasive sexual abuse problems for years, and that school officials have routinely faced claims related to their negligence in protecting students, improper hiring and supervision of employees and teachers, and their failure to adequately respond to allegations. Some examples include:²

- **[Calvert Hall College High School \(Towson, Baltimore County\)](#)**
- **[The Talmudical Academy \(Pikesville, Baltimore County\)](#)**
- **[McDonogh School \(Owings Mills, Baltimore County\)](#)**
- **[Northeast High School \(Pasadena, Anne Arundel County\)](#)**
- **[Gilman School \(Roland Park, Baltimore County\)](#)**
- **[Walt Whitman High School \(Bethesda, Montgomery County\)](#)**
- **[Key School \(Annapolis, Anne Arundel County\)](#)**
- **[W.C. Moffett School \(Barclay, Queen Anne’s County\)](#)**

This bill will require the State Department of Education to develop a model sexual abuse and sexual misconduct response policy that includes, at minimum, certain components; requiring each local school system to adopt a certain response policy on or before July 1, 2027; and requiring each local school system to provide certain notices and conduct certain after-action reviews under certain circumstances.

I respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on SB#0685.

¹ <https://lawyerpages.law/article/sexual-abuse-in-maryland-schools-holding-public-and-private-institutions-accountable.html>

² <https://www.levylaw.com/maryland-school-sexual-abuse-lawsuits/>

Crisis response - testimony - 2026 - FWA SB685.pdf

Uploaded by: Lisae C Jordan

Position: FWA



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

P.O. Box 8782
Silver Spring, MD 20907
Phone: 301-565-2277
Fax: 301-565-3619

For more information contact:
Lisae C. Jordan, Esquire
443-995-5544
mcasa.org

DRAFT

Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 685 with Amendments
Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel
March 4, 2026

The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) is a non-profit membership organization that includes the State's seventeen rape crisis centers, law enforcement, mental health and health care providers, attorneys, educators, survivors of sexual violence and other concerned individuals. MCASA includes the Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI), a statewide legal services provider for survivors of sexual assault. MCASA represents the unified voice and combined energy of all of its members working to eliminate sexual violence. We urge the Education, Energy & the Environment Committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 685 with Amendments

Senate Bill 685

Community Notification and Support After Allegations of Sexual Misconduct or Abuse

This bill would require, among other things, development of a model response policy for local school systems to use to respond to credible allegations of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct.

Senate Bill 685 is a response to the very difficult situation which occurred after allegations of sexual misconduct and offenses by a teacher in an Anne Arundel County Elementary School and parents of students at the school were left without the support or information they needed. While one case prompted this legislation, the systemic failures revealed happen repeatedly and this legislation would provide needed structure when horrible things happen to students or investigations occur. As things currently stand, many schools are reluctant to share information about allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse within their institutions. Motivation for this reluctance can range from concerns for student privacy and the integrity of investigations, to a desire to protect against liability and harm to the alleged abuser.

SB685 creates a system that allows the needs of parents and students to be addressed in the aftermath of sexual misconduct and abuse. Abuse thrives on secrecy and creating a system that is transparent helps create a culture that discourages future abuse. Without strong systems in place to share information and resources, gossip and faulty advice can take over. SB685 will help make sure that parents and communities have access to accurate information and will

provide referrals to existing resources. It will help provide caretakers with the tools they need to respond to sexual abuse and – most importantly – how to talk with their children.

MCASA strongly urges that the Committee specifically adopt amendments requiring that information regarding the rape crisis centers certified under Criminal Procedure §11-923 and the child advocacy centers established under §13-2201 Health-General be included in the bill as resources (page 3, lines 24-25 and page 4, lines 15-16). Maryland has worked hard to support these resources and it is important to take steps to ensure communities are reminded of them in times of crisis. Information and services range from materials on [*Understanding the Legal System When Your Child Has Been Sexually Abused*](#), to counseling at rape crisis centers, to expert forensic exams at child advocacy centers.

SB685 Amendments:

On page 3, in line 25, after “SUPPORT RESOURCES” insert “INCLUDING RAPE CRISIS CENTERS CERTIFIED UNDER §11-923 OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE AND CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS ESTABLISHED UNDER §13-2201 OF THE HEALTH-GENERAL ARTICLE”

On page 4, in line 16, strike “IF ANY” and substitute “INCLUDING RAPE CRISIS CENTERS CERTIFIED UNDER §11-923 OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE AND CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS ESTABLISHED UNDER §13-2201 OF THE HEALTH-GENERAL ARTICLE”

On page 4, in line 3, after “BE DELAYED” insert “IF DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION WOULD INTERFERE WITH AN INVESTIGATION OR PROSECUTION.”

Additionally, MCASA respectfully suggests that the Committee consider mandating record retention for a longer period of time, and that reports to the school board after an after-action review be mandated, not merely permitted.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Education, Energy & the Environment Committee to
report favorably on Senate Bill 685 with Amendments**



SB 685_HB 1168_ Local School Systems - Sexual Abu

Uploaded by: Trudy Tibbals

Position: FWA

SB 685/HB 1168: Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct - Response Policy and After-Action Review: Please vote to **SUPPORT** this bill **WITH AMENDMENTS**.

Dear Education, Energy & the Environment Committee and Ways & Means Committee:

I am writing to strongly urge you to **SUPPORT SB 685/HB 1168** during committee consideration or floor votes, with the following amendments to strengthen parental notification, record retention, and public accountability.

I fully support the core goals of establishing clear, consistent procedures to protect students from sexual abuse and sexual misconduct by school employees or contractors, ensure prompt investigations, and learn from incidents. However, the current language could be improved with targeted amendments to better protect children and families:

1. Require notification of an allegation of child abuse by an employee of the local school system to be provided to the child's parent or guardian as soon as possible and not later than within **2 school days**. Timely parental notification is essential for supporting the child, accessing resources, and maintaining trust in the school system.
2. Require that all e-mail and electronic records regarding a credible allegation of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct by an employee be retained by the local school system for a minimum of **5 years**. This ensures critical evidence is preserved for investigations, audits, or future reviews, preventing premature destruction of documentation.
3. **Require** that a written redacted report of the findings of the after-action review be provided to the State Board of Education and the State Superintendent. (Change the language from "may" to "shall"). Sharing redacted findings statewide promotes transparency, allows the Department to identify systemic issues, and helps disseminate lessons learned to all local systems for stronger prevention.

These amendments enhance child protection, parental involvement, evidence preservation, and systemic accountability without weakening the bill's intent. **With these changes, SB 685/HB 1168 would become a more robust, effective framework to safeguard students from sexual abuse and misconduct in Maryland schools.**

For these reasons, I respectfully ask you to **vote in favor of SB 685/HB 1168 and support the proposed amendments to strengthen notification, retention, and reporting requirements.**

Thank you for your time and thoughtful consideration of my support with minor changes to this critical student safety legislation.

Sincerely,

Trudy Tibbals

SB0685_DHS_INFO.pdf

Uploaded by: Gloria Brown-Burnett

Position: INFO



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Gloria Brown Burnett, Interim Secretary

March 4, 2026

The Honorable Brian J. Feldman, Chair
Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee
2 West Miller Senate Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB 685 - LOCAL SCHOOL SYSTEMS - SEXUAL ABUSE AND
SEXUAL MISCONDUCT - RESPONSE POLICY AND AFTER-ACTION REVIEW -
POSITION: INFORMATION**

Dear Chair Feldman and Members of the Education, Energy, and Environment Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully submits information for Senate Bill 685 (SB 685).

With offices in every one of Maryland's jurisdictions, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. Our Social Services Administration (SSA) implements the Child Protective Services (CPS) program which is affected by SB 685.

SB 685 would require the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) to develop a model sexual abuse and sexual misconduct response policy and mandate that local school systems adopt their own policies by July 1, 2026. Key provisions would require "prompt notification" to parents of credible allegations, maintaining electronic records and maintaining a public webpage for "serious incidents," and conducting "after-action reviews" to identify systemic safety gaps. SB 685 specifically intersects with the Department of Human Services (DHS) operations by defining "child abuse or neglect" as a "serious incident" subject to public reporting. Additionally, section 4-148(E) of this bill would explicitly authorize DHS to request that a school system withhold details or delay public communication related to these allegations.

The process envisioned by SB 685 would significantly undermine state confidentiality laws designed, in part, to prevent additional trauma for children alleged to be victims as well as to protect the constitutional rights of individuals accused of abuse. [Human Services Article § 1-202](#) restricts DHS from disclosing reports or records of child abuse or neglect outside of specific exceptions. One exception under Human Services Article § 1-202(c)(1)(vii) permits DHS to disclose specific information to school superintendents or principals regarding investigations involving school personnel or contractors. The exception is intended solely for internal administrative action and student safety, not for public dissemination. SB 685 would create a potential conflict with confidentiality requirements outlined in Human Services Article § 1-201 - 1-203 by requiring subsequent publication of confidential information by the school system to satisfy the bill's mandatory "serious incident" public reporting requirements. Even where DHS is not directly disclosing sensitive information to the public, "derivative disclosure" could violate the individual privacy rights of the subject and potentially expose the Department to legal liability.

While we understand the intent of SB 685 is to increase transparency regarding misconduct by school staff, we believe its text is overly broad and may inadvertently undermine the integrity of processes intended to protect children from harm. For example, the bill definition of "serious incident" does not include a crucial limitation that the allegation is credible. Additionally, "serious incident" is broad and would include any instance of alleged "child abuse or neglect." Publishing such a wide range of claims could make it more difficult for the public to accurately evaluate risk, which could subvert the very intent of the legislation.

The bill's notification requirements pose particular safety risks in cases where an allegation has been made against a parent or caregiver. In the absence of limiting language, the bill would not prevent a school from publicly disclosing information about allegations of abuse or neglect made by a student against a parent or caregiver. Furthermore, it does not explicitly prohibit disclosure to a parent that their child alleged maltreatment against them. Consequently, the bill's requirement for "prompt notification" could inadvertently compel a school to notify a parent of an allegation before CPS can intervene or conduct initial interviews. Premature disclosure would directly jeopardize the integrity of the investigation and, potentially, the immediate safety of the child.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide information to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at justin.hayes1@maryland.gov.

In service,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Gloria Brown Burnett". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "G".

Gloria Brown Burnett
Interim Secretary

SB685_MSEA_Cook_INFO.pdf

Uploaded by: Jessica Cook

Position: INFO

**Informational
Senate Bill 685
Local School Systems – Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct – Response
Policy and After-Action Review**

**Education, Energy, and Environment Committee
March 04, 2026**

**Jessica Cook
Government Relations**

The Maryland State Education Association offers this informational testimony on Senate Bill 685, legislation that requires the State Department of Education to develop a model sexual abuse and sexual misconduct response policy that includes, at minimum, certain components; requiring each local school system to adopt a certain response policy, provide certain notices in a certain manner, and conduct a certain after-action review under certain circumstances; and generally relating to sexual abuse and sexual misconduct response policies.

As currently drafted, the legislation compromises the integrity of the investigative process of police and department of social services (DSS) and raises significant due process concerns for school employees. For these reasons, amendments are necessary.

In Maryland, educators are mandated reporters. When an educator suspects abuse or neglect – based solely on suspicion – they are legally required to report that suspicion immediately to police and the Department of Social Services (DSS). Educators are trained to err on the side of the child, and no evidentiary threshold, corroboration requirement, or internal investigation is necessary prior to making such a report. Upon a report being made against a school employee, the employee is placed on administrative leave and merely told that an “allegation” has been made.

DSS evaluates the allegations and determines whether an investigation is warranted. If accepted for investigation, DSS contacts the child and parent or guardian within 24 hours of accepting the report. There already exists a mechanism for immediate reporting to trained professionals and timely parental notification to



the parent and child through DSS. This process preserves investigative integrity as well as ensuring student and employee protections.

Under SB685, a parent must receive prompt notification from the school system upon receipt of a “credible allegation” that results in the removal of a school employee. The school system, however, does not, and should not, make determinations regarding the credibility of allegations prior to referral to DSS and police. Requiring school systems to notify parents upon the making of a report and before DSS assesses whether the allegations meet the criteria for abuse or neglect risks rumor and speculation within the school community, thereby, compromising DSS’ and the police’s ability to preserve evidence and conduct neutral fact-finding. Furthermore, because the school employee has been placed on administrative leave based solely upon “suspicion”, there is significant reputational harm to the employee without the necessary procedural safeguards. The proposed parental notification by the school system exacerbates the harm and removes an employee’s due process rights.

Finally, Maryland’s mandatory reporting framework functions because educators are trained and encouraged to report suspensions immediately and without attempting to substantiate the claim themselves. If reporting a suspicion triggers school-level parental notification, educators may become reluctant to report ambiguous situations. Such a chilling effect would directly undermine the intent of Maryland’s mandatory reporting law and could ultimately reduce protections for children.

SB 685 - Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and S

Uploaded by: Mary Pat Fannon

Position: INFO



Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director
1217 S. Potomac Street
Baltimore, MD 21224
410-935-7281
marypat.fannon@pssam.org

BILL: SB 685

TITLE: Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct - Response Policy and After-Action Review

DATE: March 4, 2026

POSITION: Letter of Information

COMMITTEE: Senate Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

CONTACT: Mary Pat Fannon, Executive Director, PSSAM

The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four local school superintendents, provides this **letter of information on** Senate Bill 685 as we continue to discuss amendments with the sponsor.

This bill requires the State Department of Education to develop a model sexual abuse and sexual misconduct response policy that includes certain minimal components; requires each local school system to adopt a response policy and provide notices in a certain manner, and conduct an after-action in under certain circumstances; and generally relates to sexual abuse and sexual misconduct response policies.

PSSAM appreciates the intent of this bill and the sponsor's work on ensuring that students and families navigating trauma receive compassionate support, timely resources, and clear, responsive communication. We believe that effective communication with communities is essential to fostering safe, supportive learning environments.

As currently drafted, SB 685 would:

1. Require the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a **model sexual abuse and misconduct response policy** that includes expanded public communication requirements and enhanced document retention standards;
2. Require local school systems to **adopt policies aligned with MSDE's model**;
3. Mandate that school systems **establish a website** providing updates regarding pending misconduct investigations; and

4. **Require after-action reviews** following serious incidents to assess response, communication, and coordination with investigators.

We share the goal of ensuring students are supported when serious events occur. However, as currently drafted, SB 685 creates significant statutory, operational, and due process concerns for local school systems. Below are some of our **concerns with the bill as drafted**:

Disruption of Maryland’s Mandatory Reporting Framework

Maryland has a long-standing, carefully structured statutory framework governing child abuse reporting and investigation. All school personnel are mandated reporters and reports of suspected abuse are made to Child Protective Services (CPS) within the Department of Social Services (DSS). CPS is responsible for screening reports, determining investigative status, managing the timing and manner of parental notification, and protecting investigative integrity and confidentiality.

SB 685 would, in certain circumstances, shift responsibility for incident notification from DSS to local school systems. This represents a significant departure from Maryland’s statutory structure, which intentionally separates the act of reporting (school personnel) and the act of investigating and notifying (CPS). Requiring school systems to independently notify families of newly defined “credible allegations” risks interfering with active or potential investigations and compromising student safety in sensitive situations. This separation exists for a reason: it protects children, preserves investigative integrity, and safeguards due process.

In addition, the bill introduces new terms and Undefined Legal Standards— including:

- “Credible allegation”
- “Serious incident”

These terms do not currently exist in Maryland statutory construction in this context and lack clear legal standards or definitions. Without established definitions, school systems may be required to act before professional screening occurs and notification could occur in cases that are later screened out. More importantly reputations may be harmed before facts are evaluated and community alarm may be triggered unnecessarily.

School staff frequently report out of an abundance of caution. Many reports are screened out by CPS. If every report automatically triggers immediate notification, it may unintentionally discourage reporting in ambiguous situations — undermining the very child protection goals we all share. It is essential that staff continue to report concerns without fear that a precautionary report will result in immediate reputational consequences before facts are reviewed.

Community Notification Mandates

The bill requires communication plans that specify what information must be shared publicly at each stage of the response process. Automatic public notification of allegations, regardless of investigative status, may compromise confidentiality and escalate situations prematurely. Most importantly, this would affect employee due process rights.

Maryland's current framework allows CPS to determine appropriate timing and scope of notification. A more targeted approach could achieve the bill's goals without altering the core structure of mandatory reporting law. Many investigations into allegations are ultimately unsubstantiated. In practice, public disclosure alone can effectively end a career in that community.

New Record Retention Requirements

We understand alternative language may be under consideration. Generally, PSSAM is cautious about mandated retention frameworks that create local fiscal burdens and require long-term digital storage infrastructure and compliance monitoring. There may also be conflict with existing local or State retention schedules. Retention frameworks should be grounded in sound records management principles, privacy protections, and operational feasibility, not in the hope of retroactively identifying wrongdoing through routine educational records.

Website Posting Requirements

The bill requires that each local school system create a time-stamped webpage that confirms the nature of an alleged incident and provides status updates on an ongoing investigation. Requiring public confirmation and ongoing updates risks compromising due process, mischaracterizing allegations as findings, and creating an unworkable compliance standard.

We appreciate the intent to ensure transparency and access to resources. However, we believe a more effective and equitable approach would be to require:

- Standing crisis resource pages
- Easily accessible trauma-response supports
- Information for families, students, and staff across *all* crisis scenarios

Trauma is trauma. Resources should be available for any event that overwhelms a school community — not limited to a single category of misconduct.

After-Action Reviews

Reviewing serious incidents to strengthen systems and improve future responses is a constructive goal. However, requiring an after-action review in every instance of staff removal may produce unintended consequences. In many situations, established protocols work as designed: a concern is reported, the employee is removed, authorities investigate, and appropriate action follows. Automatically triggering a secondary review each time could create unnecessary second-guessing of frontline decisions or unintentionally shift focus in ways that risk victim or bystander blame.

It is also important to recognize that these matters often involve multiple independent entities, including child protective services and law enforcement. Their investigations are confidential and occur outside the school system's authority. When those agencies identify deficiencies in reporting or safety practices, they already issue findings and recommendations. Any after-action requirement should therefore be carefully structured to reinforce system improvement without compromising the confidentiality, integrity, or independence of those investigative processes.

We believe the goals of SB 685 can be accomplished in a clearer and more efficient manner — by refining Maryland's existing statutory framework under Md. Code Ann., Educ. Art. § 7-1501 et seq. (Maryland Safe to Learn Act)

Many provisions of SB 685 could dovetail with the Safe to Learn Act's existing requirements for school emergency planning and crisis response. Rather than creating a parallel system, we recommend strengthening the existing one. For instance, *expanding the definition of "School Emergency Plan" and strengthening communication requirements within the existing law.*

PSSAM strongly supports ensuring that students and families receive timely support, clear communication, and appropriate resources during times of crisis. However, we believe the most effective and efficient way to realize the bill's goals is to refine and expand the existing Safe to Learn Act rather than alter Maryland's mandatory reporting framework or create parallel notification mandates.

We welcome continued dialogue with the sponsor and stakeholders and would be pleased to assist in drafting amendments that protect students, support families, preserve due process, maintain investigative integrity, and provide clear and practical guidance to local school systems. We appreciate the ongoing collaboration and look forward to working together toward a solution that achieves these shared goals.

PSSAM appreciates the opportunity to provide this **letter of information** on SB 685 and welcomes continued discussion with the sponsor and the committee.

SB 685 - State Board & MSDE - LOI.docx.pdf

Uploaded by: Richard Kinkaid

Position: INFO

TO: Education, Energy, and the Environment Committee

BILL: Senate Bill (SB) 685 – Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct - Response Policy and After-Action Review

DATE: March 4, 2026

POSITION: Information

The Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) provides this Letter of Information regarding Senate Bill (SB) 685 – Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct - Response Policy and After-Action Review.

SB 685 requires MSDE to create a model policy for responding to credible allegations of sexual abuse or misconduct in schools. Local education agencies (LEAs) must adopt this policy by July 1, 2027. The policy must include:

- Timely parent notification of a credible allegation
- A communications plan, including providing status of any investigation
- Record retention requirements
- A time-stamped public webpage for each serious incident, confirming the nature of the incident, sharing nonidentifying investigation updates, and linking to support resources
- After-Action review, including report to the State Superintendent and State Board of Education

The Department is grateful for the sponsor’s leadership on this issue and for their focus on student safety and community trust, and shares the goal of ensuring that all students are protected in the school environment and that families receive appropriate information when sensitive situations arise.

Existing law, Maryland Family Law Section 5-704, establishes mandatory reporting for certain professionals who suspect child abuse or neglect. This applies to health practitioners, police officers, educators, and human service workers. Under the law, if these individuals have reason to believe a child has been abused or neglected, they must immediately notify the local Department of Social Services or law enforcement. If they work in an institution such as a hospital, school, or childcare facility, they must also inform the head of the institution or their designee without delay.

Existing law requires both an oral and a written report. The oral report must be made as soon as possible, and the written report must be submitted within 48 hours to the local Department of Social Services, with a copy sent to the local State’s Attorney. Reports should include identifying information about the child and parent, the child’s location, details about the nature and extent of the abuse or neglect, and any other information that could help determine the cause and identify the party responsible.

While both Family Law § 5-704 and SB 685 require immediate reporting to authorities, documentation, and coordination when abuse or misconduct is suspected, SB 685 also mandates public notification at the allegation stage. This early disclosure could conflict with § 5-704 by shifting the focus from confidential reporting for investigation purposes to community transparency, potentially undermining law enforcement and child protective services’ ability to conduct thorough, unbiased investigations.

SB 685 places new responsibilities on LEAs beyond existing mandated reporter requirements, including the obligation to establish and maintain a time-stamped public webpage for each serious incident with ongoing, nonidentifying updates and related resources. Publishing sensitive information on a school system website, as required under this bill, will require significant training and legal review, and may inadvertently expose and identify the victim, the reporters, and the accused to the entire community. Additionally, posting information prior to a final legal determination raises due process concerns and may expose the LEA to liability if allegations do not result in a conviction.

Maryland public schools have protocols in place regarding parent notification of certain incidents in schools. In some cases, notice is provided to the parent and guardian of the student(s) involved, while in others, it is appropriate to notify the school community. In all cases, strategies must protect the disclosure of personally identifying information of all parties, in accordance with the law, of the victim, the reporters, and the accused.

Finally, the bill also requires local school systems to conduct after-action reviews following serious incidents, but it does not specify how the findings or the information likely shared with MSDE and the State Board should be used or standardized, creating potential inconsistencies and unclear expectations.

The Department shares the goal of keeping students safe and communicating transparently with the school community, and is open to discussions on systems that balance student safety with protecting the due process rights of all. MSDE respectfully requests consideration of these comments as SB 685 is discussed and deliberated. For further information, please contact Laurel Crastley at laurel.cratsley@maryland.gov.

SB 685 - LOI - Sexual Misconduct Response and Afte

Uploaded by: Sam Mathias

Position: INFO

BILL: Senate Bill 685
TITLE: Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct - Response Policy and After-Action Review
HEARING DATE: March 4, 2026
POSITION: Letter of Information
COMMITTEE: Education, Energy, and the Environment
CONTACT: Sam Mathias, Legal & Policy Director (smathias@mabe.org)

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all 24 local boards of education across the State, **provides this informational letter for Senate Bill 685 - Local School Systems - Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct - Response Policy and After-Action Review.**

As currently written, SB 685 requires:

- The Maryland State Department of Education to develop a model sexual abuse and misconduct response policy that, in part, requires significant and robust public communication by school systems of pending investigations and more stringent document retention policies;
- School systems to adopt a response policy based on MSDE's model;
- School systems to establish a website that provides real-time updates of pending investigations of alleged misconduct; and
- Mandated after-action reviews on the conclusion of any serious incident to review how the event happened, execution of communication protocol, and coordination with investigators.

MABE has been in significant contact with the sponsor of this bill and appreciates the collaborative effort put forward by the sponsor and staff. We share the sponsor's commitment to student safety and accountability and remain hopeful that amendments can be developed to improve the practicality of the bill while protecting both student safety and staff due process. As currently drafted, however, SB 685 raises several significant concerns that we believe warrant careful reconsideration.

Community Notice Considerations

Mandating community notice requires careful balancing of two important interests: the community's understandable desire to know that a serious allegation occurred and is being addressed, and the necessity of preserving investigative integrity and due process. Many investigations into allegations are ultimately unsubstantiated. Yet once notice is issued, the reputational harm to a staff member can be permanent, regardless of the outcome or the veracity of the allegations. In practice, community notice alone (even without

specifically identifying the alleged perpetrator) can effectively end a career in that community.

At the same time, there is a value in a clear, standardized initial communication. Parents and guardians have an interest in knowing that an allegation has been reported, that supports for alleged victims have been put in place, and that the matter is now in the hands of the appropriate authorities. Most of all, a notice must set expectations for parents and community members that they will not get any more information from the school system or investigators, and for good reason.

If community notice is included in the bill, it must be tightly defined and limited: at most, it could include one prompt notice at the outset of an allegation, after a report and staff removal have occurred; and one communication at the conclusion of the investigation explaining the outcome and any resulting action. Nothing more. Ongoing updates to the community during an active investigation are neither appropriate nor responsible. They risk compromising the investigation, eroding due process, and fueling speculation. While a community may want ongoing updates, such updates (and expectations for updates) unequivocally cause harm.

Website and Real-Time Updates

MABE has significant concerns with the requirement that each local school system create a time-stamped webpage that confirms the nature of an alleged incident and provides status updates on an ongoing investigation. At a point of staff removal, a school system has received an allegation and made a mandatory report; it has not confirmed facts. Investigations are conducted by Child Protective Services or law enforcement, and school systems do not control or even receive real-time investigative information. Requiring public confirmation and ongoing updates risks compromising due process, mischaracterizing allegations as findings, and creating an unworkable compliance standard.

MABE has no issue with ensuring that families have ready access to counseling and support resources. A standing webpage with general information about reporting processes and available local supports is appropriate. **However, that information should not be incident-specific, nor should it be tied to confirming any allegations, tracking or providing updates to an active investigation.**

Document Retention

We understand that document retention is part of this bill to attempt to codify that school systems and investigators may be able to retrieve evidence from school system electronic documents. In practice, substantiated cases of misconduct are very rarely (if ever) proven through internal school documentation. School systems have robust Acceptable Use

Policies (in large part to regulate and ensure appropriate communication between students and everyone else), and thus electronic communications of school systems are heavily regulated and monitored. In fact, in surveys of several school system Title IX coordinators and Human Resources officers, together having overseen coordination of dozens of staff removals, not a single substantiated claim contained evidence from school system electronic communications. Such evidence is typically developed through interviews, law enforcement investigation, retrieval of personal communications (e.g., cell phone records, text messages, personal emails), and other external sources. Expansive retention mandates focused on uncovering misconduct in school system files risk creating significant administrative burden without materially improving student safety outcomes.

Instead, retention frameworks should be grounded in sound records management principles, privacy protections, and operational feasibility, not in the hope of retroactively identifying wrongdoing through holding routine school system electronic communications.

After-Action Review

The concept of reviewing serious incidents to improve systems has merit. However, mandating an after-action review for every staff removal risks unintended harm. In many cases, protocols function exactly as intended: an allegation is reported, the staff member is removed, authorities investigate, and appropriate action is taken. An automatic after-action review in every instance may create a dynamic of second-guessing front-line staff or, worse, inadvertently contributing to victim or bystander blame.

In addition, multiple independent entities play distinct roles in these matters, including child protective services and law enforcement. Those investigations are confidential and conducted outside the control of the school system. Where independent investigative bodies issue findings and recommendations, they already identify any breakdowns in reporting or safety practices. An after-action requirement must be carefully calibrated so that it strengthens systems without undermining the integrity or confidentiality of those independent processes.

MABE stands ready to work constructively with the sponsor and the Committee in support of building framework that strengthens student safety, protects community trust, and preserves investigative integrity and due process.