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The Maryland House of Delegates
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Testimony in Support of HB 1005

Child Abuse and Neglect – Reporting – Survivor Reporting Reform Act

Testimony of Delegate Cathi Forbes

Judicial Proceedings

April 2, 2026

What this bill does

This bill requires the Department of Human Services to develop a reporting process for mandatory reporters when they are reporting past child abuse from adult survivors.

What is the problem this bill is trying to address

Under Maryland’s current mandated reporting requirements, professionals must report suspected incidents of child abuse if suspected abuse is active, and on-going, or it is being reported by an adult survivor of past abuse.

This legislation is meant to deal with reports being made on behalf of adult survivors and was drafted at the suggestion of a group of clinicians who feel the current mandatory reporting for adult survivors can be chilling to their therapeutic relationships, cause additional trauma for survivors, and is fraught with inconsistencies.

When individuals are abused and neglected, their power, control, and autonomy are taken away from them. When adult survivors make the brave decision to seek therapy, they are met with the unfortunate news in their very first session, where they are told that their therapist will have to break confidentiality and file a report if they provide identifiable information about past suspected child abuse or neglect. It doesn’t matter if the person alleged to have done the abuse is dead, or if the survivor doesn’t want to report the incident.

The current mandated reporting requires the same form for reporting, whether the incident is current and happening today, or happened decades ago. [DHR/SSA 180](#) is the form that must be completed. This form does not distinguish between active abuse and past abuse. It asks questions adult survivors may not be able to answer, and awkward things, like “name of the child.” These people are adults.

Mandatory reporters are currently required to do both an oral report, as soon as possible, and written reports within 48 hours. Each county has a different process. Current guidelines say that mandated reporters must contact the “local offices.” When it comes to adult survivors, the question becomes, “Where is the local office?” It is unclear to therapists where to report the alleged abuse of the survivor if it occurred in another state. These therapists must obey the mandatory reporting law, or risk their credentials as Maryland has criminalized mandatory reporters who fail to report abuse.

What we are hoping to do is to have DHS collaborate with the interested persons: survivors, practitioners, local departments, law enforcement, and state’s attorneys to create a reporting system that is more sensitive to survivors, useful to those receiving the information, and provides clarity to the practitioners about where the reports should be filed.

Why you should vote for this bill

The current system is well-intentioned, as no one wants to allow child abuse to go unreported. The current system is designed for active abuse situations and is unintentionally causing harm to adult survivors of child abuse. On behalf of these adults, and the professionals who care for them, I ask for a favorable report. Thank you.