

**sb 711 Testimony.pdf**

Uploaded by: Paul Corderman

Position: FAV

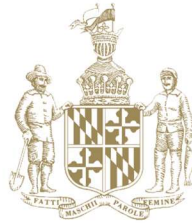
PAUL D. CORDERMAN  
*Legislative District 2*  
Frederick and Washington Counties

Budget and Taxation Committee

*Subcommittees*

Capital Budget

Education, Business and Administration



James Senate Office Building  
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Paul.Corderman@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 26, 2026

Senate Judicial Proceedings  
Chair William C. Smith, Jr.  
Vice Chair Jeff Waldstreicher  
2 East Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**Testimony In Support of SB 711 - Family Law - Child Neglect Definition - Alteration**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to present Senate Bill 711. SB 711 expands the definition of child neglect under Maryland law to include a parent's or caregiver's failure or refusal to provide a child with the education required by law. In doing so, it adds educational neglect to the existing forms of neglect recognized in statute.

Recognizing educational neglect in statute is important because consistent school attendance is fundamental to a child's development, safety, and long-term well-being. Clarifying that access to education is a basic responsibility helps ensure that children receive the support and oversight necessary to prevent long-term academic harm and related social consequences.

Thank you for your consideration of this bill, and we respectfully request a favorable report on SB 711.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "P. D. Corderman".

Senator Paul D. Corderman – District 2, Washington & Frederick Counties

# **SB 711 Letter - Support.pdf**

Uploaded by: Taylor Dickerson

Position: FAV



MARYLAND  
PSYCHOLOGICAL  
ASSOCIATION

9175 Guilford Road, Ste 300 #1112, Columbia, MD 21046 | 410-992-4258 | [www.marylandpsychology.org](http://www.marylandpsychology.org)

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February 24, 2026

Senator William C. Smith, Jr., Chair  
Senator Jeff Waldstreicher, Vice Chair  
Judicial Proceedings Committee  
2 East, Miller Senate Office Building  
Annapolis, MD 21401

**RE: SB 711 – Family Law - Child Neglect Definition - Alteration**

**Position: SUPPORT**

Dear Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists throughout the state, asks the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to **report favorably on SB 711**.

The MPA recognizes the profound, wide-ranging, immediate, and long-lasting negative effects experienced by children who have suffered abuse and/or been neglected. These include but are not limited to negative impacts on physical development and health (compromised immune systems leading to the development of chronic diseases and a shortened life span), psychological, behavioral, and cognitive well-being (alters brain function by damaging the development of the architecture of the brain), academic performance and achievement, and social relationships, to name a few. They are well documented in a multitude of research. Perhaps the most well-known is the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study conducted by the Centers for Disease Control and Kaiser Permanente. The results of these studies were released in a widely known and accepted report in 2005.

A child's education is a critical element in their success in life, and it is essential that school-aged children participate in education regularly and consistently in order to see the best outcomes. Missing significant amounts of schooling can have seriously adverse consequences on a child's future, with likely outcomes including fewer employment opportunities upon graduation, lower earning power, decreased likelihood of enrollment in a college or career preparation program, and even increased risk of dropping out without completing high school at all.

There can be many reasons for a student's lack of attendance in school, but if the reasons include the parents/caregivers' failure to get their child to school or to work with the school to ensure good attendance, this neglect of the student's basic needs should be treated just as seriously as the other elements of the current abuse/neglect reporting law.

The MPA applauds the Committee for its ongoing willingness to consider strengthening support that the community might be able to provide to children facing abuse and/or neglect, therefore, the **Maryland Psychological Association supports SB 711 and urges a favorable Committee Report**.

If we can be of any further assistance as the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D. at [mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com](mailto:mpalegislativcommittee@gmail.com).

Respectfully submitted,

*Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.*  
Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.  
President

*Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.*  
Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.  
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs

# Statement PDF.pdf

Uploaded by: Caitlin Snodgrass

Position: FWA

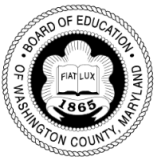
My name is Caitlin Snodgrass, I am a resident of Hagerstown and I support this bill with amendment of the verbiage as follows-

Neglect includes the failure or refusal to provide education as required by law for children at least 6 years of age and who have not completed 6th grade. Absences from school may not be considered abuse or neglect unless it causes the child to be involuntarily withdrawn from school and the school is unsuccessful in restoring enrollment.

**SB 711 FAV W\_AMEND WashCoBdEduc 2-26-26.pdf**

Uploaded by: Jamie Brown

Position: FWA



**BILL:** Senate Bill 711  
**TITLE:** Family Law – Child Neglect Definition - Alteration  
**HEARING DATE:** February 26, 2026  
**POSITION:** FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS  
**COMMITTEE:** Judicial Proceedings Committee  
**CONTACT:** Ms. Jamie Brown, Paralegal & Legislative Representative, 301-766-2946

Family Law Article §5-203 mandates that parents of a child are responsible for the child’s support, care, nurture, welfare, and **education**. The Board of Education values the legislature’s acknowledgment of the importance of parental accountability as it relates to a child’s education. It supports Senate Bill 711 which seeks to further that accountability by expanding the definition of neglect to include the failure or refusal of a parent or guardian to provide to a child the education required by law. However, the Board of Education offers amendments to remove any subjectivity and to make clear for mandated reporters, local departments of social services, and local state’s attorney’s offices when such failures or refusals meet the definition of neglect.

The Board of Education respectfully requests the Judicial Proceedings Committee to consider the following amendments to Senate Bill 711:

(2) “NEGLECT” INCLUDES THE FAILURE OR REFUSAL TO PROVIDE TO A CHILD THE EDUCATION REQUIRED BY LAW BY ANY PARENT OR OTHER PERSON WHO HAS PERMANENT OR TEMPORARY CARE OR CUSTODY OR RESPONSIBILITY FOR SUPERVISION OF THE CHILD[.] IF:

(i) A CHILD (AGE 5 TO 17) HAS TWENTY (20) OR MORE UNLAWFUL ABSENCES IN A SCHOOL YEAR (UP TO THREE (3) REPORTS PER YEAR PER CHILD); OR

(ii) A CHILD (AGE 5 TO 17) RESIDES IN MARYLAND AND THE PARENT OR OTHER PERSON WHO HAS PERMANENT OR TEMPORARY CARE OR CUSTODY OR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CHILD REFUSES TO ENROLL OR PROVIDE PROOF OF ENROLLMENT OF THEIR CHILD IN A MARYLAND APPROVED EDUCATIONAL PROGRAM (PUBLIC SCHOOL, NON-PUBLIC SCHOOL, OR HOMESCHOOL); OR

(iii) A PUBLIC SCHOOL SYSTEM DETERMINES THAT IT IS NECESSARY TO WITHDRAW A CHILD FROM PUBLIC SCHOOL USING THE MARYLAND STATE DEPARTMENT OF EDUCATION WITHDRAWAL CODE “NOT ACCESSING EDUCATION” AND THE PARENT OR OTHER PERSON WHO HAS PERMANENT OR TEMPORARY CARE OR CUSTODY OR RESPONSIBILITY FOR THE CHILD IS KNOWN OR SUSPECTED TO BE CONTINUING TO RESIDE IN MARYLAND.

Every school day matters and consistent daily attendance is essential to student success. The changes proposed in Senate Bill 711, together with existing truancy laws, further emphasize the importance of regular school attendance and reinforce the responsibility of parents and guardians to ensure their child is receiving the education required by law.

*Washington County Board of Education supports Senate Bill 711 with the amendments set forth above and requests the Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable with amendments report.*

Thank you.

Cc: Washington County Board of Education Members  
Washington County Delegation to the Maryland General Assembly  
Dr. David T. Sovine, Superintendent  
Dr. Gary Willow, Deputy Superintendent  
Mr. Jeffrey Proulx, Chief Operating Officer  
Mr. Jeremy Jakoby, Director of Student Services, School Counseling and School Health

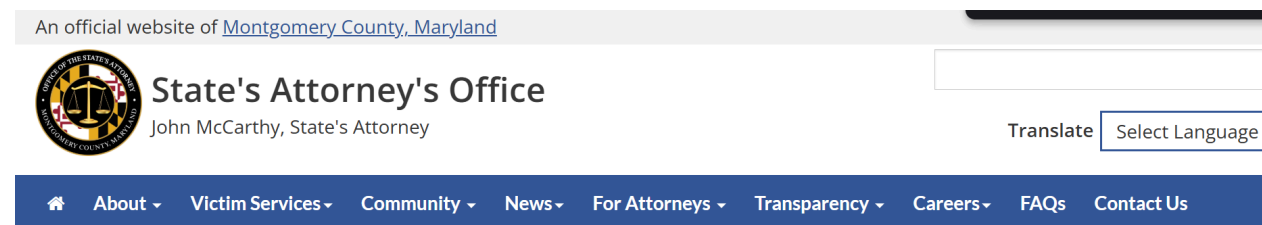
# **Unfavorable SB711.pdf**

Uploaded by: Valerie Borek

Position: UNF

Valerie Ferrell, Cecil County.

I respectfully ask that you vote unfavorable on SB 711, which would change the definition of child neglect to specifically include educational neglect. The bill is unnecessary, and will not achieve the end of getting more kids into school where they can be observed and potentially helped if they are in a dangerous situation. Maryland law is already interpreted as including educational neglect (see image below). Explicitly expanding the definition can only mean there will be more reports, which will burden a system already primed for over-reporting. This will put serious strain on the investigators, as well as the budget. Over-reporting also runs the risk of drowning out the serious cases where our state and county employees can help a child or family in need.



## Crimes Against Children: Neglect Frequently Asked Questions

*This section provides answers to common questions about child neglect under Maryland law.*

### What is Neglect?

Neglect is any form of **maltreatment** or **negligence** that **harms a child's health, welfare, or safety**. This can include physical, emotional, or **educational** neglect.

Example: Screenshot of Montgomery County state attorney's office webpage explaining what child neglect includes, taken 2/24/26.

<https://www.montgomerycountymd.gov/SAO/units/family/neglectfaq.html>

**eactestimony2026.SB711.pdf**

Uploaded by: Elizabeth Benevides

Position: INFO

# **EDUCATION ADVOCACY COALITION FOR STUDENTS WITH DISABILITIES**

JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS

**SENATE BILL 711**

**FAMILY LAW—CHILD NEGLECT DEFINITION—ALTERATION**

FEBRUARY 26, 2026

**POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION**

The Education Advocacy Coalition for Students with Disabilities (EAC), a coalition of nearly 50 organizations and individuals concerned with education policy for students with disabilities in Maryland, submits this Letter of Information for Senate Bill which alters the child neglect definition to include a parent or guardian's failure or refusal to provide their child's education.

The EAC appreciates the intent of Senate Bill 711, which recognizes the importance of school attendance for academic success. Many EAC members represent or work with families who have children with significant disabilities for whom school attendance is difficult. This bill does not consider that a parent or guardian's failure to send their child to school may be related to the child's disability.

EAC members have represented families of students with autism, anxiety, or severe mental illness. Some students may have experienced trauma, injury, or bullying. Others may be nonverbal, they may have challenging behaviors, or they may be school-phobic because of a previous event. What may look like absenteeism may, in fact, be school refusal or non-attendance for disability-related reasons.

In some cases, school employees may play a role in the child's inability to access instruction. Many families seek assistance from their school system's Individualized Education Program (IEP) team, asking the team to help design a plan to get the child to school or, in the most desperate of situations, to approve home instruction on the basis of emotional crisis. Many times, home instruction is refused or is not authorized more than once, or the IEP team denies responsibility for helping to figure out how to get the child to school.

As advocates for all students with disabilities throughout Maryland, the EAC submits this letter of information to highlight that Senate Bill 711 could unintentionally create a punitive response to a situation that is related to disability and should be approached thoughtfully.

Education Advocacy Coalition Testimony: Senate Bill 711, page 2

Contact: Beth Benevides, [ebenevides@hussmanfoundation.org](mailto:ebenevides@hussmanfoundation.org), Co-Chair, Education Advocacy Coalition, 443-590-3164

Respectfully submitted,

Selene Almazan, Attorney

Rene Averitt-Sanzone, Parents Place of Maryland

Linda Barton, Education Consultant

Beth Benevides, Autism Society of Maryland; Co-Chair, Education Advocacy Coalition

Ellen Callegary, Attorney (retired)

Melanie Carlos, Partnership for Extraordinary Minds (xMinds)

Michelle Davis, ABCs for Life Success

Beth Ann Hancock, Charting the Course

Mallory Legg, Project HEAL at Kennedy Krieger Institute

Rachel London, Maryland Developmental Disabilities Council

Beth Nolan, Education Team Allies

Ellen O'Neill, Atlantic Seaboard Dyslexia Education Center

Ronza Othman, National Federation of the Blind of Maryland

Kate Rabb, The Law Offices of Joseph & Rabb

Rebecca Rienzi, Pathfinders for Autism

Jaime Seaton, BGS Law

Leslie Seid Margolis, Disability Rights Maryland

Kelly Spanoghe, Education Consultant

Ronnetta Stanley, Loud Voices Together Education Advocacy Group

Wayne Steedman, Maryland Special Education Lawyers and The Steedman Law Group

Rick Tyler and Ellie Mitchell (Co-Chairs), Maryland Education Coalition (MEC)

**SB0711\_DHS\_INFO.pdf**

Uploaded by: Justin Hayes

Position: INFO



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

February 26, 2026

The Honorable William C. Smith, Jr., Chair  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

**RE: TESTIMONY ON SB 711 - FAMILY LAW - CHILD NEGLECT DEFINITION -  
ALTERATION - POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION**

Dear Chair Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully submits information for the committee's consideration of Senate Bill 711 (SB 711).

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 Prevention and Child Safety (PCS) program which is affected by SB 711. Child Protective Services (CPS), under the leadership of PCS, is responsible for investigating all reports of child abuse and neglect in Maryland. SB 711 proposes expanding the definition of neglect by a parent or guardian to include the failure or refusal to provide an education for a child in their care.

The Department takes child safety very seriously. However, we respectfully disagree that chronic absenteeism or truancy should be categorized as childhood neglect. There are various reasons why a child may not attend school, and the Maryland State Department of Education (MSDE) and local school systems already have the statutory authority and personnel to address attendance issues.

Altering the definition of child neglect would compel mandated reporters to make reports of said neglect to the Department, to which we would be obliged to respond. Immediately involving CPS based solely on a child's absence in school would be

counterproductive to our goal of emphasizing prevention services for families, and could increase trauma and distrust of social services agencies. In addition, we are mindful that research demonstrates that expanding mandated reporting requirements, especially for teachers, risks diverting resources from child abuse investigations.

[Education Article §7-301](#) already describes parental requirements for ensuring a child receives educational services and establishes specific penalties for non-compliance. Instead of expanding the definition of neglect to trigger future CPS investigations, DHS believes that an alternative, preventative approach leveraging existing community resources and the DHS Family Preservation program is a more effective and family-centered strategy.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our letter of 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](mailto: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

**DRMtestimony2026.SB711.pdf**

Uploaded by: Leslie Margolis

Position: INFO

**SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS COMMITTEE**

**SENATE BILL 711 – FAMILY LAW – CHILD NEGLECT DEFINITION – ALTERATION**

**February 26, 2026**

**Position: Letter of Information**

Disability Rights Maryland (DRM) is the protection and advocacy organization for the state of Maryland; the mission of the organization, part of a national network of similar agencies, is to advocate for the legal rights of people with disabilities throughout the state. In carrying out its mission, DRM represents many students in special education matters and engages in systemic work to ensure that students with disabilities have the opportunity to attend school safely and to obtain the free appropriate public education to which they are entitled by federal law. DRM submits this Letter of Information to outline concerns about the unintended consequences of Senate Bill 711, which would expand the definition of child neglect to include the failure or refusal to provide to a child the education required by law by any parent or other person who has permanent or temporary care or custody or responsibility for supervision of the child.

Because Senate Bill 711 does not qualify the circumstances under which failure to send a child to school could constitute neglect, the bill increases the possibility that parents whose children are not attending school will be accused of child neglect and will be swept into the juvenile court process. For example, not infrequently, DRM receives calls from distressed parents who are afraid to send their children back to school because their children have sustained injuries—often unexplained—at school, and the school staff have not taken steps to ensure that appropriate measures have been taken to ensure that their children will be safe and appropriately served at school.

Transportation can also be a significant barrier to school attendance even though school systems have the responsibility to ensure appropriate transportation for students with disabilities who need transportation to be able to attend school and benefit from their special education. School attendance can also be affected by lack of school system responsiveness to families whose children may experience school phobia or bullying, or who may have other disability-related barriers to regular school attendance.

Additionally, students with disabilities may miss school because needed staff, such as nurses, paraprofessionals or aides are not available, and it is not safe or appropriate for the student to attend. DRM has represented many students whose parents have advocated relentlessly for the provision of the services their child needs; no child should be excluded from school because of a

lack of staff or needed services, and no parent whose child is in this situation should be at risk of being charged with neglect.

Several other states have added educational neglect to their definition of neglect, but utilization of the child welfare process does not result in increased school attendance. Child protective services (CPS), an already over-burdened system, is not equipped to handle cases of educational neglect.<sup>1</sup> When cases of educational neglect reach courts, there are few mechanisms to address the challenges faced by these students. In New York, one study showed that 25% of children subject to reports of educational neglect were facing unstable housing and homelessness, something that CPS and courts do not have the tools to fix.<sup>2</sup> Although House Bill 834 provides grounds for courts to threaten to place children into foster care when reported for educational neglect,<sup>3</sup> it does not address provision of the resources that are needed to overcome the barriers faced by families, particularly those with disabilities.

Anecdotal evidence from CPS workers also reveals that reports of educational neglect often result in a finding there is insufficient evidence for the report.<sup>4</sup> Additionally, in a sampling of reports from one county in New York, approximately 50% of reports resulted in findings that parents were actively pushing their children to attend school or find support services to address their child's attendance.<sup>5</sup>

Chronic absence from school is already addressed by the truancy process, which allows school staff to separate those parents who are motivated by legitimate concerns for their children and those who are engaging in neglect.

It is also important to note that Maryland's child welfare system has come under intense scrutiny for its inability to protect the youth in its care. Increasing the potential population of children in the child welfare system will place additional stress on the system.

DRM hopes that this information will be helpful to the Committee as Senate Bill 711 moves through the legislative process.

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<sup>1</sup> Jessica Gunderson et al., *Rethinking Education Neglect for Teenagers*, VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE (2009), at p. 4.

<sup>2</sup> *Id.* at 17.

<sup>3</sup> Foster care will not improve educational outcomes; students who experience foster care are less likely to graduate high school and nearly five times less likely to graduate with a degree in higher education. See Nathanael J. Okpych et al., *Secondary and Postsecondary Education Outcomes of Students with Experience in Foster Care: Systematic Review of the Literature From 2000–2023*, AMERICAN EDUCATIONAL RESEARCH JOURNAL (2025).

<sup>4</sup> Jessica Gunderson et al., *Rethinking Education Neglect for Teenagers*, VERA INSTITUTE OF JUSTICE (2009), at p. 7.

<sup>5</sup> *Id.* at 8.

**Senate Bill 711: DRM testimony, page 3**

**Contact: Leslie Seid Margolis at [lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org](mailto:lesliem@disabilityrightsmd.org) or 443-692-2505.**