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February 19 2026

## HB 0722 - FAV

Child Sexual Abuse Claims - Doctrine of Charitable Immunity - Abrogation

Dear Chair [J. Sandy Bartlett](#), Vice Chair [Debra Davis](#), and Members of the Judiciary Committee

The doctrine of [charitable immunity](#) shields non-profit organizations from tort liability that prevents child sexual abuse survivors from suing for damages. The public policy that charitable institutions should be shielded from lawsuits because they serve the public good originated in the 9th century when there was no insurance and such institutions were rare and fragile. Most states abolished this doctrine by 1992, but Maryland still retains this legal provision. As a result, legal battles focus on whether the institution's actions or insurance status nullifies this protection. Secular Maryland calls on lawmakers to revoke this embarrassingly obsolete and inappropriate provision from Maryland state law.

On July 21, 2025, a Maryland court ruled that an adult survivor of childhood sexual abuse by a Catholic priest could not sue the Archdiocese of Washington. The court cited *charitable immunity* as the basis for its decision. Maryland recently passed a law, the Child Victims Act of 2023, to enable survivors of childhood sexual abuse to seek justice. Yet that law was not applied in this case because the defendant is an uninsured religious nonprofit. To prevent repeats of this unjust

ruling the General Assembly should enact this bill.

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