



**BILL:** House Bill 834  
**TITLE:** Family Law – Child Neglect Definition - Alteration  
**HEARING DATE:** February 19, 2026  
**POSITION:** FAVORABLE WITH AMENDMENTS  
**COMMITTEE:** Judiciary 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 House Bill 834 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 Judiciary Committee to consider the following amendments to House Bill 834:

(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 House Bill 834, 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 House Bill 834 with the amendments set forth above and requests the Judiciary 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