



Date: 2-26-26

House Judiciary Committee

House Bill 1005-Child Abuse and Neglect - Reporting (Survivor Reporting Reform Act)

Position: Letter of Information

Dear Chair Bartlett and Committee Members,

On behalf of Center for Hope House, we respectfully submit this letter of concern regarding HB1005. We share the goal of ensuring that adult survivors of abuse have meaningful access to services and supportive pathways to disclosure. Adult survivors deserve trauma-informed responses that center their safety, dignity, and healing. At the same time, protecting children must remain central to any policy response addressing abuse reporting. We do not believe HB1005 as introduced strikes the appropriate balance to achieve these objectives.

Child abuse remains significantly underreported. We continue to encounter far too many cases in which abuse went unreported for years or where early disclosures were not acted upon. Our collective focus should be on strengthening disclosure pathways, reinforcing mandated reporting compliance, and enhancing accountability not creating additional ambiguity that could allow perpetrators to remain unexamined.

We are particularly concerned that the bill places responsibility on survivors to indicate whether the accused currently has access to children. Even with clarification that survivors are not required to investigate, this framework effectively shifts a burden onto individuals who are often not in a position to know such information. Survivors especially young adults navigating disclosure may already face shame, fear of retaliation, family pressure, or uncertainty about consequences. For example, a 19-year-old survivor coming forward may be hesitant or embarrassed, introducing additional decision points about the accused's present access to children risks creating another barrier to disclosure. Survivors should not bear responsibility for assessing potential ongoing risk. When delayed reports result in no action, the solution should be stronger enforcement of mandated reporting obligations and improved accountability systems not narrowing or conditioning reporting duties. If disclosures were previously made and not pursued, that is where reform and oversight are needed.

We agree that the issue HB1005 seeks to address is real and requires thoughtful consideration. We would recommend in **consultation with the Department of Human Services** and others **stakeholders to determine** how other states have approached similar challenges and to collaboratively determine the most effective path forward. Center for Hope House remains committed to policies that both protect children and support survivors in meaningful, accessible ways. Thank you for your consideration of our concerns. We appreciate the Committee's leadership on this important issue and look forward to continued engagement.

Respectfully,

Alison D'Alessandro

Center for Hope-Senior Policy & Program Specialist

5400 Preakness Way Baltimore, MD 21215 Adalessa@lifebridgehealth.org [410-601-4673](tel:410-601-4673)