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Government, Labor, and
Elections Committee

Subcommittees

Government Operations and Ethics
Labor

Local Government/Bi-County Agencies
and Administration

House Study Group on Economic Stability



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

HB834-Family Law – Child Neglect Definition – Alteration

Judiciary

February 19th, 2026: 1:00 PM

Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and honorable members of the committee, for the record I am Delegate Matthew J. Schindler, and I am here to present House Bill 843. HB834 would alter the definition of child neglect to include the failure or refusal to provide a child with an education as required by law. This bill is to ensure that a child's right to education is upheld, and that services and interventions can be introduced to families who require them.

Access to education is a fundamental right and is a critical component to the long-term physical and mental health and development in our adolescence. When a caregiver neglects to properly enroll, provide or facilitate a child's access to education, the harm can be irreversible. Students who miss weeks, months, and even entire grades are at risk of being unable to perform basic reading, writing, and mathematical skills. Additionally, a child's mental health can be negatively impacted by the inability to socialize and learn with their peers. The deprivation of education carries lifelong implications that include limited literacy, reduced job opportunities, and a general instability throughout life. As we have made a commitment to education as a state, most of you know that the only stability many of our students get is the warmth, meals, and guidance provided to them during the school day.

Many states throughout the United States have recognized educational neglect as needed specification within child welfare law. 24 states have explicit educational neglect statutes including New York, New Hampshire, Delaware, West Virginia, and Oklahoma. These states have recognized the need to categorize this type of neglect and ensure that there is a legal way for the educational neglect of a child to be identified and triaged with solutions.

Without this statutory clarification, children who are never enrolled, constantly absent, or denied needed educational support can fall through the cracks and never receive the help they need. House Bill 0834 clearly defines a children's right to education and holds caregivers who may neglect this right accountable.

I've heard some concern from DHS not on the merits of educational neglect but on the capacity to deal with what they fear would be an untenable amount of increased neglect cases. I do not agree with this statement. We have received a favorable with amendments from the department of education, and we would be amenable to these. We want to allow the school truancy officers to do their jobs, but we have seen that there are children who may have moved to our state and never started school, missed school long enough that they've been unenrolled, or simply never got enrolled in the first place. Many of these children may be unhoused, and we are seeking a way to provide help for these forgotten children. We merely want to provide a means for concerned citizens, or family members, community members, to reach children that may otherwise slip through the cracks. Attached to our uploaded testimony is a chart of Code 50 data of just Washington County K-6 students who have dropped off the radar and never returned to school. That data is shocking and if we can protect even one child by implementing this bill, then I believe we should do that.

Therefore, I ask for a favorable report on House Bill 0834.

Washington County data obtained via public information request and is accurate as of November 2025.

W50's Grade K-6 Yearly Compare						
	19-20	20-21	21-22	22-23	23-24	24-25
W50's During School Year	12	22	37	61	61	44
Summer W50's	6	6	18	27	23	14
Total W50's	18	28	55	88	84	58
Re-enroll from W50 returned 19-20	3					
Re-enroll from W50 returned 20-21	1	7				
Re-enroll from W50 returned 21-22		2	23			
Re-enroll from W50 returned 22-23			3	28		
Re-enroll from W50 returned 23-24			2	7	29	
Re-enroll from W50 returned 24-25				2	6	25
Re-enroll from W50 returned 25-26 (September)			1	1		6
Total Returned	4	9	29	38	35	31

LJM 11102025
 Data Source - September and EOY State files
 One to One relationship