



**BILL NUMBER:** HB 722

**TITLE:** Child Sexual Abuse Claims - Doctrine of Charitable Immunity - Abrogation

**COMMITTEE:** Judiciary

**HEARING DATE:** 2/19/2026

**POSITION:** FAV

TurnAround, Inc. is the designated rape crisis center for Baltimore City and Baltimore County and a comprehensive domestic violence service provider. Core components of our work include crisis response, survivor-centered advocacy, legal referrals, trauma-informed therapy, and community education. TurnAround also serves as the Regional Navigator for Baltimore County and Howard County, providing specialized services to survivors of human trafficking. Each year, we support survivors as they navigate criminal investigations, civil and criminal protective orders, and related court proceedings across Maryland.

House Bill 722 would abrogate the doctrine of charitable immunity as a defense in any civil action for damages arising out of a claim of sexual abuse that occurred while the victim was a minor. The bill makes clear that an organization may not avoid liability on the grounds that it is a charitable organization and applies this protection retroactively to pending, concluded, and dismissed cases involving child sexual abuse. For the survivors we serve, this clarification is critical to ensuring that the institutions that enabled or failed to prevent abuse can be held accountable in civil court.

In our work, we routinely hear from adult survivors of child sexual abuse whose experiences occurred in schools, youth-serving programs, faith communities, and other nonprofit or charitable settings. Many of these survivors are only now, years or decades later, able to disclose their abuse, connect it to the harm they continue to experience, and consider seeking legal recourse. Yet when institutional defendants can invoke charitable immunity, survivors face an additional, technical barrier that has nothing to do with the merits of their claims and everything to do with the historical status of the defendant.

Maryland has already recognized, through Courts and Judicial Proceedings § 5–117, that claims arising from child sexual abuse warrant special treatment, including the removal of traditional statutes of limitation and repose so that an action “may be filed at any time.” HB 722 is a logical and necessary extension of that policy choice: it ensures that the ability to file a claim is not undermined by a doctrine that shields certain organizations purely because they are charitable in form. Without this bill, similarly situated survivors can be treated very differently based solely on

the type of entity that failed to protect them, which undermines both fairness and public confidence in the justice system.

From a survivor-centered perspective, civil accountability serves several vital functions. It can provide resources for long-term treatment, lost wages, and other consequences of trauma; it can incentivize institutions to implement safer policies and practices; and it can validate survivors' experiences in a way that promotes healing. When charitable immunity blocks these claims, survivors receive the message that institutional status matters more than the harm they endured, and organizations have fewer incentives to rigorously prevent, detect, and respond to abuse.

We are particularly supportive of the bill's statement that an organization "is not immune from liability" in actions arising from child sexual abuse and its directive that this rule applies retroactively. Survivors whose cases were previously dismissed or never filed because of charitable immunity should have a clear path to seek civil redress under the same framework the General Assembly created when it opened the look-back window for child sexual abuse claims. HB 722 offers that path in a targeted way, focused solely on claims involving sexual abuse of minors and leaving other doctrines and defenses intact.

For these reasons, HB 722 will better align Maryland law with contemporary understandings of trauma, institutional responsibility, and the long-term impact of child sexual abuse. It will help ensure that survivors are not denied their day in court because of an outdated doctrine that no longer reflects our values or our knowledge about how abuse occurs and persists in institutional settings. TurnAround, Inc. respectfully urges the Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 722.

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