



FOR YOUTH DEVELOPMENT
FOR HEALTHY LIVING
FOR SOCIAL RESPONSIBILITY

House Bill 281 – Family Law – Child Care Providers – Criminal Background Investigations

House Judiciary Committee
February 5, 2026
SUPPORT

Good afternoon, Madam Chair and members of the House Judiciary Committee.

My name is James Torrence, Executive Director of the Maryland Alliance of YMCAs, which represents six independent YMCA associations serving children and families across Maryland. Collectively, our Ys **serve 421,346 Marylanders** from early childhood through older adulthood.

The Alliance supports House Bill 281 and its focus on strengthening child protections through appropriate criminal background checks. Child safety is foundational to our work, and we appreciate the bill's emphasis on closing gaps, particularly in informal and emergency caregiving situations.

Maryland Ys and Y-affiliated programs operate across **12 jurisdictions**, providing safe, stable, and affordable care that supports working families and children's development throughout the state. This footprint reflects sustained investment in quality programs and the Y's role as a trusted provider, with **more than 130 Maryland EXCELS-licensed childcare and Head Start programs**. In addition, Ys **partner with 200 local schools and leads 28 community schools**, supporting student success through wraparound services, enrichment, mentorship and family engagement. **More than 52,000 children** are served annually through Y childcare, afterschool, and summer programs.

Maryland Ys already conduct comprehensive **State and national criminal background checks** for staff and volunteers working in childcare, youth development and out-of-school time programs. We also support the bill's recognition of the important role law enforcement plays in conducting checks for emergency caregivers, where swift action is often required to protect a child while maintaining safety.

As the bill moves forward, we respectfully request clarity on implementation, particularly for emergency caregiver provisions, to ensure consistency with existing childcare practices and avoid unintended barriers for families in crisis.

Overall, House Bill 281 advances a shared priority of protecting children while maintaining practical, workable systems for providers, families and emergency responders.

For these reasons, the Maryland Alliance of YMCAs urges a favorable report on House Bill 281.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify.

Point of Contact

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