



DEPARTMENT OF HUMAN SERVICES

Wes Moore, Governor · Aruna Miller, Lt. Governor · Gloria Brown Burnett, Interim Secretary

February 26, 2026

The Honorable Sandy Bartlett, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
100 Lowe House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: TESTIMONY ON HB 1350 - CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT – DISCLOSURE OF REPORTS AND RECORDS - POSITION: LETTER OF INFORMATION

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for its consideration and respectfully submits information for the committee’s consideration of House Bill 1350 (HB 1350).

With offices in every one of Maryland’s jurisdictions, DHS provides preventative and supportive services, economic assistance, and meaningful connections to employment development and career opportunities to assist Marylanders in reaching their full potential. Our Social Services Administration (SSA) oversees Maryland’s Child Protective Services (CPS) program, which is affected by HB 1350. This bill would establish a centralized intake system for child abuse and neglect reports, funneling reports through the DHS Central Office, as opposed to local departments of social services or law enforcement. The intent of the bill would positively impact Marylanders as it would enable faster and consistent response times when reports are made after business hours and on weekends.

Under the Moore-Miller Administration, DHS has been actively exploring the infrastructure and fiscal requirements for a centralized intake system. A centralized 24/7 reporting hotline for the entire state would further reinforce our efforts to be responsive and move with urgency. However, some elements of HB 1350 have problematic intersections with existing federal and state statutory requirements and federal resources.

The legislation would jeopardize our federal Child Abuse Prevention and Treatment Act (CAPTA) grant and Title IV-E Plan compliance. HB 1350 mandates that all accepted reports be assigned “for investigation.” Requiring investigations for all reports conflicts with [CAPTA Section 106\(a\)\(4\)](#) (42 U.S.C. 5106a) authorizing and encouraging Differential Response, known in Maryland as [Alternative Response](#), for low-risk reports. HB 1350

removes DHS' ability to respond in non-investigatory ways in low risk cases when families need the most support to keep children safe. Low risk cases do not require formal CPS investigations under current law, responsibly use state resources, and enable greater collaboration with families to keep children safely at home.

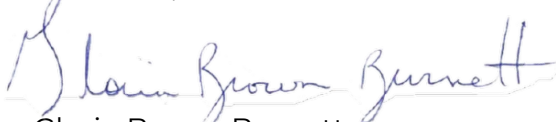
Proposed changes to Family Law Art. §5-704.2 regarding substance-exposed newborns also conflict with existing state statute. Family Law [§5-704.2\(h\)\(1\)\(2\)\(ii\)](#) requires the local department to assess the newborn and the family without requiring a CPS investigative finding. Current law emphasizes risk mitigation, prevention, and services. In contrast, HB 1350 presumes child abuse or neglect. Mandating an investigatory response for substance-exposed newborns may also violate CAPTA under [42 U.S.C. §5106a\(b\)\(2\)\(B\)\(ii\)\(i\)](#).

Maryland's existing 1-800-91-PREVENT hotline is not centralized, and instead routes all Child Welfare and Adult Protective Services (APS) reports directly to each local department of social services. DHS experience leads us to keep both child and adult reports on the same intake line, minimizing confusion for reporters. The bill does not mention if or how APS reports would be included in the proposed centralized intake system. We are also concerned about how the bill would affect local departments of social services' engagement with local law enforcement during the reporting process. HB 1350 removes the option for reporters to call police directly and strikes DHS duty to notify police of reports. These changes would reduce options in emergency situations.

We would like to thank Delegate McComas for bringing forward HB 1350. Establishing a centralized intake system for reporting is a shared goal of ours. We believe the bill needs further refinement so as to not have a negative impact on the Marylanders we serve. We look forward to working with the Delegate and other stakeholders in the interim to make a centralized intake system a reality.

We appreciate the opportunity to provide our letter of information to the Committee for consideration during your deliberations. If you require additional information, please contact Justin Hayes, Acting Director of Government Affairs, at justin.hayes1@maryland.gov.

In service,



Gloria Brown Burnett
Interim Secretary