



MARYLAND PSYCHOLOGICAL ASSOCIATION

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House Judiciary Committee
100 Taylor House Office Building
101 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: House Bill 1005 – Child Abuse and Neglect – Reporting (Survivor Reporting Reform Act)

Position: Support

Dear Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Psychological Association (MPA), which represents over 1,000 doctoral-level psychologists across the state, **writes in SUPPORT of House Bill 1005 – Child Abuse and Neglect – Reporting (Survivor Reporting Reform Act)**. This legislation proposes that the Maryland Department of Human Services develop a separate written report form for cases of alleged child abuse or neglect when the individual impacted is now an adult.

Disclosure of childhood abuse is widely recognized as complex and often delayed until adulthood. Many survivors delay disclosure for years or decades due to shame and self-blame, fear of not being believed, and concern about negative institutional responses. Trauma-informed care literature cautions that mandated reporting processes, when implemented without attention to survivor autonomy and emotional safety, may inadvertently reactivate trauma responses (SAMHSA, 2014). In clinical settings, concerns about mandatory reporting obligations may contribute to hesitancy in disclosing prior abuse and receiving care, particularly when survivors are unsure what will happen once information is shared (Alaggia, Collin-Vezina, & Lateef, 2019; Tener & Murphy, 2015).

There is also ongoing controversy within the professional and legal communities regarding whether mandated reporters must report childhood abuse when the individual disclosing the abuse is now an adult. A 1993 opinion of the Maryland Attorney General concluded that existing law requires reporting whenever there is reason to believe that child abuse occurred in the past, even if the alleged victim is now an adult. However, attorneys and other professionals have advanced differing interpretations of the statute, reflecting continued uncertainty about the scope of this obligation in clinical practice. Regardless of the legal debate, requiring mandated reporters to initiate a report when an adult discloses prior childhood abuse may be activating, triggering, and/or retraumatizing for survivors and may interfere with their willingness to seek or continue treatment. Clarifying procedures and providing a trauma-informed framework, as contemplated by HB 1005, would help address this tension while supporting both survivor well-being and professional compliance.

A standardized written reporting form designed specifically for adult survivors may help address these barriers. This format could consolidate required information at intake, reduce unnecessary repetition of traumatic details, and provide clear written explanations regarding next steps, investigative discretion, and survivor preferences. If developed with survivor and clinician input, the form can avoid stigmatizing language, clearly distinguish required from optional information, and better align reporting procedures with trauma-informed principles.

We urge the committee to provide a favorable report on HB 1005. If we can provide any additional information or be of any assistance, please do not hesitate to contact the Chair of MPA's Legislative Committee, Dr. Stephanie Olarte, at mpalegislativecommittee@gmail.com.

Respectfully submitted,

Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
Stephanie Wolf, JD, Ph.D.
President

Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D.
Chair, MPA Legislative Committee

cc: Barbara Brocato & Dan Shattuck, MPA Government Affairs