



MARYLAND
PSYCHOLOGICAL
ASSOCIATION

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February 24, 2026

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Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair
Delegate Debra Davis, Vice Chair
Judiciary Committee
101 Taylor House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: HB 1326 – Child Abuse and Neglect – Disclosure of Reports and Records

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 throughout the state, asks the House Judiciary Committee to **report favorably on HB 1326**.

The MPA recognizes the profound, wide-ranging, immediate, and long-lasting negative effects experienced by children who have suffered abuse and/or been neglected. These include but are not limited to negative impacts on physical development and health (compromised immune systems leading to the development of chronic diseases and a shortened life span), psychological, behavioral, and cognitive well-being (alters brain function by damaging the development of the architecture of the brain), academic performance and achievement, and social relationships, to name a few. They are well documented in a multitude of research. Perhaps the most well-known is the Adverse Childhood Experiences Study (ACES) conducted by the Centers for Disease Control (CDC) and Kaiser Permanente (KP). The results of these studies were released in a widely known and accepted report in 2005.

With this information in mind, it appears that the goal of this legislation is to help ensure that those who have responsibility for overseeing the health and well-being of children are provided with information that can be critical to their mission of fostering the health and well-being of the children in their care or under their supervision. The bill enhances the Department of Human Services' (DHS) ability to disclose information regarding a covered employee who has been found responsible to the following groups: childcare providers, youth athletic programs, or certain government-affiliated programs where adults provide supervision or care for children.

MPA recognizes the importance of providing safe and healthy environments in which children can thrive. Providing this information to the administrators of these additional organizations appears to be an attempt to enhance the safety of the children under these organizations' care while closing a currently existing gap in the effort to provide kids with safe and healthy environments in which to thrive. The hope being to prevent exposing additional children to the risk of suffering either abuse or neglect at the hands of individuals who have been identified as engaging in abusive and/or neglectful behavior.

The MPA applauds the Committee for its ongoing willingness to consider strengthening support that the community might be able to provide to children facing abuse and/or neglect, therefore, the **Maryland Psychological Association supports HB 1326 and urges a favorable Committee Report.**

If we can be of any further assistance as the House Judiciary Committee considers this bill, please do not hesitate to contact MPA's Legislative Chair, Dr. Stephanie Olarte, Ph.D. at mpalegislativcommittee@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