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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
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HB1350– FAMILY LAW – CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT – REPORTING
Cross-Filed with SB484

Currently, when a mandated reporter, (policeman, therapist, teacher) or a concerned citizen seeks to report suspected child abuse and/or neglect, they are directed to call the local police department or the county’s Department of Social Services to make the report. There is no sharing of interdepartmental information between either of these state agencies or police departments. This is the crux of the situation. With so many children at risk and the heavy caseload of social workers in every jurisdiction, HB1350 proposes a modernized, modular, and flexible solution that improves caseworker efficiency and data accuracy to promote better child outcomes through the gathering, maintaining, and sharing of information for analysis by all concerned.

Known as the Comprehensive Child Welfare Information Systems (CCWIS), this tool offers flexibility through a choice in size, functions, and a variety of modules, rather than a one-size fits all program, thus allowing for the updating of modules rather than the whole system as the technology improves with feedback from its end users. With the timely input of high-quality and consistent data, child welfare outcomes are better tracked, often allowing for automated reporting. The System has user-friendly interfaces and automated data collection fields that streamline workflow and data entry, reducing the caseworkers’ burden and redirecting this time to be used for direct care of the child(ren).

With the implementation of CCWIS, the improved interdepartmental communication between other state agencies, such as the Health Department and Department of Education, the System reduces duplication of data entry and enhances outcomes for our most vulnerable and valuable assets, our children. With real-time sharing

and mobile access, child welfare professionals can stay informed and connected, thus enabled to react to situations faster and efficiently.

The Department of Human Services would establish, support, and assign reported cases of child abuse and/or neglect to the appropriate local department for investigation upon assessment of the situation and the validity of the report. This centralized intake system is acknowledged by the Department of Human Services with some modifications to ensure the appropriate and required intersection with federal mandates and requirements. We welcome their suggestions and input to make Maryland CCWIS a reality for the benefit of all concerned.

The most recent report from The Administration for Child and Families, dated October 24, 2024, states that the District of Columbia, Puerto Rico and 45 states have declared as using the CCWIS. Maryland's "DEV & OP" status (functionality implemented while limited development continues). Federal "Final Rule" on implementing the reporting program requires states to beginning collecting the required information by October 1, 2028, and first data files containing the information are due by May 15, 2029. We must overcome the DHS budgetary issues that were recently brought to light and get this project moving forward.

Please enter a favorable report for HB1350. These compromised children depend on us. Federal regulations require a response.

Thank you, Madame Chair and Committee Members.

Susan K. McComas