

THE COALITION TO PROTECT MARYLAND'S CHILDREN

Our Mission: To combine and amplify the power of organizations and citizens working together to keep children safe from abuse and neglect. We strive to secure budgetary and public policy resources to make meaningful and measurable improvements in safety, permanence, and wellbeing.



**HB0501 - Criminal Law – Sexual Offense by a
Person in a Position of Authority
House Judiciary Committee
February 10, 2026**

Position: SUPPORT

The Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children is a consortium of organizations and individuals formed in 1992 who are concerned about the care of Maryland's most vulnerable children and work together to promote meaningful child welfare reform.

CPMC urges a favorable report on HB0501 - Criminal Law – Sexual Offense by a Person in a Position of Authority.

HB0501 strengthens Maryland's protections for children and young people by holding adults in positions of authority to a higher and more appropriate standard of accountability.

Under current law, individuals such as teachers, coaches, counselors, and program supervisors - those entrusted with the safety, development, and wellbeing of Maryland's children - may face only misdemeanor penalties for serious sexual misconduct. This does not reflect the gravity of the harm caused when an adult abuses their power to exploit a young person. These relationships are inherently unequal. Minors depend on these adults for guidance, support, and protection, making true consent impossible in many cases.

HB0501 recognizes this imbalance and responds appropriately. By creating a distinct offense for sexual misconduct by persons in positions of authority and establishing graduated penalties based on the severity of the conduct and the age of the victim, this bill ensures that the law better reflects the reality of abuse and exploitation.

Importantly, this legislation strengthens protections for the most vulnerable children, including those under the age of 13, by establishing clear felony penalties. It also addresses repeat offenders and connects these offenses to existing sex offender registry and solicitation laws, closing dangerous gaps in our current system.

For many young people, particularly those involved in child welfare, foster care, or community-based programs, trusted adults may be among the only consistent figures in their lives. When that trust is violated, the damage can be long-lasting, affecting mental health, educational outcomes, and future stability. Survivors deserve a legal system that takes their experiences seriously and responds with meaningful consequences.

HB0501 sends a clear message: Maryland will not tolerate the abuse of authority or the exploitation of children. This legislation affirms that protecting young people is a priority

and that those who violate that trust will be held fully accountable to the fullest extent of the law.

For the reasons above, the Coalition to Protect Maryland's Children **urges a favorable report on HB0501 - Criminal Law – Sexual Offense by a Person in a Position of Authority.**¹

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¹ Members of CPMC represented by this written testimony include American Academy of Pediatrics – MD Chapter, Arrow Child & Family Ministries, Center for Hope, Child Justice, Citizens Review Board for Children, Court Appointed Special Advocates (Baltimore County), Maryland Association of Resources for Families and Youth (MARFY), Maryland Children's Alliance, Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, National Association of Social Workers – MD Chapter, State Council on Child Abuse and Neglect (SCCAN), TurnAround, Inc., and individual members of the coalition.