



TESTIMONY FOR HB1168 – Local School Systems – Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct – Response Policy and After-Action Review – FAVORABLE

Bill Sponsor: Delegate Bagnall

Committee: Ways and Means

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Jessica Gorski, Executive Committee

Position: FAVORABLE

Chair, Vice Chair, and Members of the Committee,

My name is Jessica Gorski, and I am submitting this testimony in strong support of HB1168 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. We are a statewide coalition of grassroots organizations representing more than 30,000 Marylanders across every legislative district. Our mission is to ensure that state policy protects people’s lives, health, and dignity, especially the safety and well-being of children who depend on schools and trusted adults for protection.

HB1168 strengthens that commitment by establishing clear, consistent, and accountable statewide standards for responding to sexual abuse and sexual misconduct in Maryland’s public schools.

This bill requires the Maryland State Department of Education to develop a model sexual abuse and sexual misconduct response policy that includes specific, essential components. It further requires each local school system to adopt its own response policy by July 1, 2027, and to provide required notices and conduct after-action reviews when incidents occur. These measures ensure that every school system follows a uniform, evidence-based framework for prevention, reporting, and accountability.

These protections are urgently needed.

Schools are central to children’s daily lives, and when sexual abuse or misconduct occurs, or when warning signs are missed, the consequences are profound and lasting. Maryland currently lacks a standardized statewide response framework, resulting in inconsistent practices and gaps that can leave

children vulnerable. HB1168 closes those gaps by ensuring that every school system has:

- Clear response protocols that outline immediate steps when allegations arise.
- Mandatory notices to families and appropriate authorities.
- After-action reviews that identify failures, strengthen future responses, and prevent repeated harm.
- A statewide model policy that sets a baseline for safety, transparency, and accountability.

The bill also recognizes the operational realities of local school systems by providing a reasonable implementation timeline. The July 1, 2027, deadline ensures that systems can adopt strong, sustainable policies while maintaining urgency around child safety.

HB1168 aligns squarely with the mission of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. It strengthens child protection, promotes transparency, and ensures that Maryland's public schools uphold the highest standards of safety. **No child should ever be placed in a school environment where sexual abuse or misconduct is mishandled, minimized, or ignored.**

We respectfully urge a FAVORABLE report on HB1168.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Jessica Gorski
Executive Committee
Maryland Legislative Coalition