

## **Written Testimony in Support of House Bill 1168**

### **An Act Concerning Local School Systems -Sexual Abuse and Sexual Misconduct – Response Policy and After-Action**

Submitted to: Maryland House of Delegates, Ways and Means Committee

Hearing Date: March 10, 2026

Submitted by: Jennifer Hansel

Severna Park, Maryland

#### **Madam Chair, Madam Vice Chair, and Members of the House Ways and Means Committee:**

My name is Jennifer Hansel and I am providing written testimony in support of House Bill 1168. I am a Maryland parent and my children attended, and one still attends, Severna Park Elementary School.

Thank you for this opportunity. House Bill 1168 would require the State Department of Education to develop a model sexual abuse and sexual misconduct response policy. I strongly support this legislation because it (1) strengthens accountability and transparency through better communication, and (2) improves institutional prevention through after-action reviews.

#### **1. Communication, Transparency, and Accountability**

When allegations of sexual abuse or sexual misconduct arise in a school setting, the response must be immediate, consistent, and survivor-centered. Without standardized expectations, school systems may differ. It is essential for local school systems to have clear guidance on communicating with parents and guardians by sharing authorized public information at each stage of the response process. Public trust in the education system is strengthened when there is accountability, transparency, and good communication. Maryland students deserve consistent safeguards regardless of which school they attend.

#### **2. Continuous Institutional Improvement via After-Action Reviews**

The bill requires structured after-action reviews, which are standard practice in high-stakes environments such as healthcare and aviation. Maryland public schools,

which are entrusted with the safety of over 850,000 Maryland students, should operate with the same commitment to continuous improvement.

Without a structured review process, systemic weaknesses can remain undetected, increasing the risk of repeated harm. By mandating review and documentation, the legislation shifts schools from crisis management to better prevention and improved safety for students, teachers, administrators, and families.

Protecting children is one of the most fundamental responsibilities of government and public institutions. One in ten children will be sexually abused before they turn 18, and less than five percent of reports are ever found to be false. House Bill 1168 strengthens Maryland's child protection framework. It is a measured, reasonable, and forward-looking bill that places student safety at the center of policy. I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 1168.

Thank you for your consideration.

Respectfully submitted,  
Jennifer Hansel