



March 4, 2026

**HB 1046
School and School-Sponsored Activities - Report of Suspected Abuse or Neglect –
Parental Notification**

House Ways & Means Committee

Position: INFORMATION ONLY

The Maryland Catholic Conference offers this statement of information House Bill 1046. The Catholic Conference is the public policy representative of the three (arch)dioceses serving Maryland, which together encompass over one million Marylanders. Statewide, their parishes, schools, hospitals and numerous charities combine to form our state's second largest social service provider network, behind only our state government. The Maryland Catholic Conference also offers this testimony on behalf of the families of approximately 50,000 students served by more than 150 PreK-12 Catholic schools in Maryland.

House Bill 1046 would require a school to provide notice to the parent, guardian, or caretaker of a child if a mandated reporter reports suspected abuse or neglect. This reporting would be required whether the alleged abuse occurred at school or school-sponsored activity. The exception to this reporting requirement would be where the parent, guardian, or caretaker being notified is the subject of the report. The notice would need to be given no later than 24 hours after the report is made.

Maryland's Catholic schools have long observed stringent child protection measures beyond what was previously required by the State. As a matter of course, Catholic schools conduct mandatory criminal background checks on all employees and on volunteers who work with children, provide comprehensive awareness training to educate adults and children on how to recognize predatory behaviors, and promptly report all suspected incidents of child sexual abuse. Of course, proper reporting procedures under Maryland law and stringent (arch)diocesan policies are an integral part of that. Our teachers and staff are required to undergo training on child abuse and neglect that is often over and above what is ultimately required by state law.

With that being said, we have some concerns regarding this bill and question whether it might actively discourage reporting and child protection. First, the onus for parental notification should lie with CPS. Placing that requirement on schools may put administrators, and county boards in the case of the public school systems, in a difficult situation of having to report on

employees they may know personally or question allegations regarding. Instead, an independent third party such as CPS should be a mandated notifier of parents.

CPS may find investigations to be compromised by a disclosure. Abuse reports are confidential precisely because CPS makes these calls, not the school or its employees. Lastly, there are instances where a mandatory reporter could fear retaliation as both parties are employed by the same school or system. These things could ultimately discourage reporting.

Thank you for considering our points of concern for an otherwise well-intentioned legislative proposal.