

Members of the Ways and Means Committee:

My name is Jennifer Kraft, and I am writing in support of House Bill 1168.

I am the mother of twin boys who were students of the third-grade teacher involved in the 2024 sexual abuse allegation at Severna Park Elementary. In March 2024, I received an email stating that their teacher would be out of school indefinitely for personal reasons. Three weeks later, through another parent, I learned that this teacher had been removed due to allegations of sexual abuse involving their students.

When I learned this, I was overwhelmed by a range of emotions: shock and disbelief that I did not know the real reason this teacher was gone, panic that my children might be affected, and confusion, frustration, and anger at the lack of information.

I had so many unanswered questions myself, and I had no idea how to respond to the questions from my boys or where to turn for help. At some point I reached out to the school hoping for clarity but quickly realized that they would not be able to provide the answers or guidance I needed.

The days that followed were filled with more shock, confusion, frustration, and anger as no further information came from the school. Families experienced a lack of transparency, communication, and accountability. We relied on each other to find resources and created a piecemeal way to navigate this crisis.

When I first read House Bill 1168, I felt relief.

This legislation thoughtfully and thoroughly acknowledges and addresses the issues we faced during that time. I felt relief thinking about how different things could have been for my family and many others if this had been in place during the incident at our school.

This bill addresses the questions that flooded my mind in those first moments of panic, and it gives families consistent information to share with their children. It aligns schools and families as partners in protecting children, and it provides parents with the knowledge and resources necessary to navigate difficult situations with confidence instead of fear. What happened at Severna Park Elementary in 2024 was an emergency, and this legislation ensures that there is a consistent plan of action in place when families and schools need it most.

I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 1168.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,
Jennifer Kraft