

HOUSE BILL 198

ALISON M. HEALEY, HARFORD COUNTY STATE'S ATTORNEY

POSITION: FAVORABLE FOR HB 198

February 9, 2026

My name is Alison Healey. I am the State's Attorney for Harford County and a board member of the Maryland State's Attorney's Association (hereinafter MSAA). I am here today to offer my support for House Bill 198.

The intent of the reportable offense statute under Education § 7-303 is to provide effective notification and communication with our school systems regarding juvenile offenses by students in an effort to allow the school system to protect the safety of all of the children entrusted to their care every day. After a series of cases this year, it has become abundantly clear that amendments are needed to this statute to protect the many, many children in our schools.

A 17-year-old Defendant in Harford County brutally raped and murdered Kayla Hamilton in July of 2022. While he was the primary suspect in the case, and all investigation and evidence pointed to him being the suspect, law enforcement had to await DNA test results to file the charges against him. He was the sole and primary suspect in this case from the outset. During the time those results were pending, he was able to enroll in both Lansdowne High School and then subsequently, Edgewood High School. Neither of those school systems were aware of the potential danger that he presented to their schools and students due to notification only being permitted in juvenile cases upon arrest and disposition. Thus, we were unable under the current law to notify the schools of the danger he presented and that he was a suspect in this heinous crime.

In order to prevent this danger reoccurring in the future, H.B. 198 would give State's Attorneys the authority to notify the superintendent of a school system or his/her designee, and only those individuals, if a juvenile is the suspect in a felony or crime of violence. H.B. 198 permits the State's Attorney to do so, but does not mandate it. This allows State's Attorneys to use

discretion as to the reporting of these matters and to reserve it for cases where there is a true potential danger to the students in the school system.

You, as legislators, should be concerned with all students, not just those charged with crimes. The students charged in these types of violent crimes should not be more important than the remainder of the students in the school. You have to ask yourself if the information was available about a dangerous student and one of your children or family members was harmed because the information was not permitted to be shared with the schools, would that be ok with you? It certainly shouldn't be. All students should matter equally, and this bill simply seeks to consider all students in school environments.

Most notably, we are not dictating what the school must do with this information. Very simply, it is a bill of necessary notification and communication for the safety of all students. The schools need to have the information to make appropriate decisions for all students. We cannot put juveniles who commit crimes above the safety of the thousands and thousands of students in our schools. Very simply put, all of our children must be safe, and House Bill 198 helps to ensure that safety of ALL children.

For these reasons, **I respectfully request a favorable report for House Bill 198.**