



621 Ridgely Avenue, Suite 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-5414 · 800-841-8197 · Fax: 410-841-6580 · MABE.org

BILL: House Bill 1046
TITLE: School and School-Sponsored Activities - Report of Suspected Abuse or Neglect - Parental Notification
HEARING DATE: March 4, 2026
POSITION: Letter of Information
COMMITTEE: Ways and Means
CONTACT: Jessica Goff, Governmental Affairs Associate (jgoff@mabe.org)

The Maryland Association of Boards of Education (MABE), representing all 24 local boards of education in Maryland, respectfully **submits this letter of information for House Bill 1046 School and School-Sponsored Activities - Report of Suspected Abuse or Neglect - Parental Notification.**

House Bill 1046 requires that if a mandated reporter reports suspected abuse or neglect that occurs at a school or school-sponsored activity, the school must provide notice of the report, within 24 hours, to the parent, guardian, or caretaker of the child unless the parent, guardian, or caretaker is the subject of the report.

Local boards of education share the Committee's commitment to student safety, transparency, and accountability. School systems take mandatory reporting obligations extremely seriously and routinely make referrals to Child Protective Services (CPS) out of an abundance of caution whenever student welfare concerns arise.

However, MABE has concerns with the bill as drafted, specifically the proposal to require a school system to notify parents within 24 hours when a report is made to CPS.

Maryland's Mandatory Reporting Framework

Maryland's child abuse reporting framework intentionally separates the roles of reporter and investigator. Schools and their employees are mandated reporters. CPS is responsible for screening, investigating, assessing safety risk, and determining the appropriate timing and manner of parental notification.

Under current practice, when a school makes a referral to CPS, the school does not notify the parent. CPS handles notification when it initiates an investigation. This structure preserves investigative integrity, protects student safety, and ensures that notification decisions are made by professionals trained in child welfare risk assessment.

HB 1046 would disrupt that framework by shifting the notification obligation from CPS to the school system at the time a report is made. That change raises serious safety and governance concerns.

Risks of Immediate LEA Notification

Requiring schools to independently notify families within 24 hours of making a report could:

- Interfere with active CPS investigations;
- Increase risk to students in situations where immediate parental notification may not be appropriate;
- Blur the clear lines of authority between reporters and investigators;
- Expose school systems to potential liability; and
- Undermine employee due process where allegations are unverified.

In many instances, schools make referrals precisely because the facts are unclear and require professional assessment. The overwhelming majority of reports are screened out by CPS and handled locally, which reflects the system working as designed. Mandated reporters are encouraged to err on the side of caution.

If every precautionary call automatically triggers immediate parent notification before CPS conducts screening, it risks creating unnecessary alarm, escalating situations prematurely, and damaging reputations before facts are established. This may also create a chilling effect on reporting. Staff may hesitate to report lower-level or ambiguous concerns if doing so automatically results in immediate parental notification, even when CPS ultimately determines the report does not meet investigative criteria.

Maryland has worked intentionally to strengthen reporting compliance over time. We should be cautious about any change that could unintentionally discourage reporting.

Conclusion

Local boards are committed to strengthening student protections where appropriate. However, HB 1046, as drafted, overcorrects in a way that creates new safety and governance risks and disrupts Maryland's carefully constructed mandatory reporting framework.



621 Ridgely Avenue, Suite 300, Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-5414 · 800-841-8197 · Fax: 410-841-6580 · MABE.org

We respectfully urge the Committee to consider revisions that maintain the separation of reporting and investigation responsibilities while addressing concerns regarding transparency in screened-out cases.

MABE stands ready to work with the Committee on constructive amendments that preserve student safety, due process, and the integrity of the child welfare system.