



**PSSAM**  
Public School Superintendents' Association  
OF MARYLAND

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**BILL:** HB 1046

**TITLE:** School and School-Sponsored Activities - Report of Suspected Abuse or Neglect - Parental Notification

**DATE:** March 4, 2025

**POSITION:** Letter of Information

**COMMITTEE:** House Ways and Means Committee

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The Public School Superintendents' Association of Maryland (PSSAM), on behalf of all twenty-four public school superintendents, provides this **letter of information** regarding House Bill 1046.

This legislation requires a school to provide notice to the parent, guardian, or caretaker of a child if a mandated reporter reports suspected abuse or neglect that occurs at a school or school-sponsored activity, unless the parent, guardian, or caretaker is the subject of the report; and requires the notice to be provided not later than 24 hours after the report is made.

PSSAM shares the goal of ensuring safe, supportive learning environments for all students and recognizes the importance of clear communication with families. We offer the following information for the committee's consideration.

***Under Maryland law, all school personnel are mandated reporters of suspected child abuse or neglect and take this legal responsibility extremely seriously.*** Mandatory reporting requirements are well established in State law and are consistently reinforced through school system policies, procedures, and training.

This legislation would shift, in certain circumstances, the responsibility for notifying a parent, guardian, or caretaker from the Department of Social Services (DSS) to local education agencies (LEAs). This represents a significant departure from Maryland's longstanding statutory framework, which intentionally separates the act of reporting from the responsibilities of investigation and notification.

The bill is also unclear on what information is to be reported to the parent. The bill says “THE SCHOOL STAFF SHALL PROVIDE NOTICE OF THE REPORT . . .” but does not specify what should be included in the “notice.” Providing notice that a report has been made without any details of the specific allegations, and without any facts or investigative findings is especially troublesome.

Currently, Child Protective Services (CPS), within DSS, is responsible for assessing safety risks, determining whether an investigation is warranted, and managing the timing and manner of parental notification. This process includes appropriate privacy protections for all parties involved and ensures that investigative integrity and student safety remain paramount.

Requiring school systems to independently notify families within a specified timeframe - such as 24 hours - could interfere with active or potential investigations, increase risks to students in sensitive situations, expose school systems to additional liability, and blur the clear lines of authority between reporters and investigators.

***Shortening the notification timeline or shifting the responsibility for parent notification to the school system may have unintended consequences.*** If school personnel understand that every report, including those made out of an abundance of caution, will automatically result in immediate parent notification, it could discourage reporting in situations where facts are unclear or ambiguous.

School staff regularly make mandated reports in circumstances that require professional assessment, even when the information available is preliminary or inconclusive. Many such reports are ultimately screened out and determined not to meet Child Protective Services (CPS) criteria for investigation. If parental notification occurs prior to that screening determination, it could inadvertently harm reputations, escalate situations unnecessarily, or create confusion, even when the conduct in question is later found to be appropriate or contextual.

It is essential that staff continue to report concerns whenever something warrants professional review, without fear that a precautionary report will automatically result in reputational consequences before the facts are evaluated. The existing framework in which CPS conducts screening and manages the timing and manner of notification helps maintain both student safety and appropriate due process protections.

***We understand that the legislation may be intended to address situations in which CPS declines to initiate an investigation and a matter is handled through local school system procedures.*** However, the proposed approach extends well beyond that circumstance and may unintentionally disrupt the balance between reporting protocols and investigative processes. Local policies can, and do, address such scenarios in a manner that preserves appropriate due process protections for individuals subject to internal review, while maintaining transparency with families when appropriate.

Mandating parental notification in all reported cases, regardless of investigative status, may create unnecessary alarm, compromise confidentiality, and affect employee due process rights. A more targeted approach may better address the concerns identified without altering the core structure of Maryland's mandatory reporting framework.

PSSAM appreciates the opportunity to provide this **letter of information** on HB 1046 and welcomes continued discussion to ensure that any changes strengthen student safety while preserving the integrity of existing child protection processes.