

Date: March 21, 2023

Bill number: SB0148

Committee: House Appropriations Committee

Bill title: **Victim Services Programs – Supplementing Federal Funding and Support (Victim Services Stabilization Act)**

DHS Position: **FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Department of Human Services (DHS) thanks the Committee for the opportunity to provide written support for Senate Bill 148 (SB 148).

Senate Bill 148 would ensure that victim services would receive an annual budget supplement from state general funds if federal funding was unavailable to meet a \$60,000,000 annual need. The funding would be used to develop, support and provide continuity to individuals and their families. DHS is the state's primary social services agency serving over a million Maryland residents annually. While not all these individuals or their families need services provided by this funding, many may.

The following examples provide a snapshot of the benefits of SB148 on DHS's clients and their families.

Children Advocacy Centers (CAC) coordinate investigation and intervention services by bringing together professionals and agencies as a multi-disciplinary team to create a child-focused approach to child maltreatment cases. This multi-disciplinary team comprises members from many disciplines including law enforcement, social services, prosecution, mental health, medical and victim advocacy, all of whom work together in the investigation, treatment, management and prosecution of child maltreatment cases. CACs ensure that children are not re-victimized by the very system designed to protect them. A well-functioning CAC provides important support and services through the Local Departments of Social Services (LDSS) to children who have experienced extreme trauma due to maltreatment. In addition to the forensic interviewing and clinical interventions offered by the multi-disciplinary team, there is a holistic approach that may address additional needs such as food insufficiency, transportation and clothing needs as well as translator services and medical services for individuals without health insurance. In FY 2022 there were over 6,000 (statewide) cases of reported maltreatment. Many of these families received services from the CAC.

The LDSS receives reports of domestic violence when there are children in the home. The LDSS can accept these reports as a Risk of Harm and provide services to increase protective factors and reduce risk factors. Research identifies exposure to domestic violence as an Adverse Childhood Experience (ACE). As an individual's ACE score increases, so does the risk of disease, social and emotional struggles. In FY2022 there were over 1,000 (statewide) cases reported to the LDSS involving domestic violence in the home. Many of these families were referred for additional support by domestic violence providers.

The Department is grateful to offer our support for SB 148 and requests a favorable report.

