

Date: February 22, 2023
Bill Number: SB710
Committee: Judicial Proceedings Committee
Bill Title: Child Abuse and Neglect- Discharge of Reports and Records
Position: Support

The Maryland Association of Social Services Directors (MASSD) comprised of the state's twenty-four Directors of the Local Departments of Social Services are responsible for administering a complex array of programs and services through the Maryland Department of Human Services. These programs are designed to strengthen and protect the vulnerable in Maryland. The Local Departments of Social Services, through their Child Protective Services' units, are responsible for the assessment, investigation and intervention regarding cases of suspected child abuse and neglect.

The Department of Human Services (The Department) currently has the authority to disclose reports of suspected child abuse by an employee or independent contractor to authorized personnel of public and non-public school systems and childcare facilities. Sharing these reports serves as an important tool to prevent further abuse, as it allows appropriate personnel action to be taken, if warranted.

Senate Bill 710 expands The Department's authority to include disclosure of reports of neglect by employees or independent contractors, regardless of whether the victim (child) attends the specific school system or childcare facility. The passage of this legislation would also allow Child Protective Services to disclose a report of abuse and neglect to a child placement agency when the alleged maltreater is someone other than the foster parent but resides within a licensed foster care household, is a family member or someone in the home that has responsibility for providing care and/or supervision.

Available data from 2016 to present shows that more than 60% of Child Protective Services investigations statewide were the result of reports of suspected neglect. MASSD believes the expanded disclosure authority will increase the safety of all children in Maryland by helping to inform and mitigate the risk of harm. This includes the ability to suspend any placements with a licensed foster home until a Child Protective Services investigation is completed.

The Maryland Association of Social Services Directors strongly supports Senate Bill 710 and respectfully requests its passage.