

Testimony of Mark Millspaugh, Deputy Director, Baltimore County Department of
Social Services
Hearing for Senate Bill 710 - *Child Abuse and Neglect - Disclosure of Reports and
Records*

House Judiciary Committee

Wednesday, April 5, 2023

Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chair Moon and Members of the Committee, I am Mark Millspaugh, Deputy Director for Social Services with Baltimore County Health and Human Services. I also Chair the Baltimore County Child Protection Panel. I thank you for the opportunity to support Senate Bill 710 - Child Abuse and Neglect - Disclosure of Reports and Records (SB 710).

Our Department's Mission is to 1) Promote individual well-being, stronger families and communities; 2) Protect vulnerable children and adults from abuse and neglect; and, 3) Provide support to help people achieve and sustain independence. We work strategically and tirelessly to protect children from abuse and neglect and we strive to engage our community partners to create a safe and caring environment for children. Our ability to share critical information, within reason, is essential to achieving this goal. This bill closes gaps in our child protection system.

Baltimore County Department of Social Services has a strong partnership with our local school system. We routinely work together to assist families in need, and, when necessary, to protect children who are being abused. However, the current law does not allow us to do the same when an adult caregiver has been indicated for neglect of a child or for abuse of a child that is not a student. When that person works for the local school system we are unable to notify the superintendent or other school leadership of the potential risk. It is important to note that we experience more child fatalities as a result of neglect rather than abuse so there are sometimes serious child safety risks for which the employing school system should be made aware.

Similarly, Treatment Foster Care homes that are “employed” through a child placement agency licensed by the Department of Human Services are vital partners in our work. Children placed in these homes have already experienced the trauma of being removed from a caregiver and placed into out of home care. There are significant licensing requirements intended to ensure these vulnerable children are safe in their temporary homes. However, current law leaves a gap where visitors to that home or people who provide temporary child care to the children placed in that home may have an indicated finding for neglect or abuse and the local department cannot share that information with the licensed child placement agency

since the individual is not an “employee.” Surely, we can better protect children by allowing local departments to share appropriate information about adults who are engaged in children’s lives who have harmed children and may present a risk to other children placed in these homes.

These are very real concerns. Our local departments experience cases that fall into these gaps, thus leaving children vulnerable and schools and other child-serving entities unaware of the risks. I ask for a favorable report on SB 710 and am happy to take any questions at this time. Thank you.