

Support - House Bill 1571

Education –Sexual Abuse Prevention – Employment Process

3/1/18

Testimony respectfully submitted by

Jennifer Alvaro

Licensed Certified Social Worker – Clinical, MD
Licensed Clinical Social Worker, VA
Certified Sex Offender Treatment Provider, VA
Clinical Member, ATSA

Preventing childhood sexual abuse is one of the most critically important steps we as a society can take to prevent a multitude of long term negative consequences which affect not only individuals and communities but our workforce and thus the economy. Research tells us that anywhere from one of three girls and one of five boys to one out of ten children will be abused before they turn eighteen.

A large percentage of victims experience such difficulties as depression and substance abuse. They are at higher risk to be trafficked (nine of ten trafficking victims were abused before they were trafficked. When they are predisposed to higher rates autoimmune diseases then those who were not abused, these outcomes not only take a toll on them, they impact our schools, home and health care systems.

We must then act to prevent abuse from happening in the first place; we must act for the same reason we place a priority on prevention efforts such as smoking cessation, wearing seat belts and vaccinations. We do these things to prevent immediate and long-term illness and injury. We do this because health, both physical and mental, leads to more positive outcomes for individuals and society.

House Bill 1571 would take simple, common sense, concrete steps to help prevent Maryland children from being victimized by those already known to be a danger to them. One of the most effective, dramatic ways to protect our children is to keep those who have already proven themselves to be unsafe away from our most vulnerable.

Nationwide we see a well documented pattern of people abusing children in a school setting, leaving the school where it occurred and moving on to another school where they continue to abuse others. This phenomenon is so common and well known; it is called “Pass the Trash”. House Bill 1571 would dramatically put an end to those situations from occurring in Maryland. In just the past several years, we have seen numerous examples of local school systems NOT implementing the basic steps this bill would require.

- When Montgomery County schools failed to check the background of a high school security guard, they missed a prior conviction on his record. Had they found this, they never would have hired him. He went on to abuse a teen ager in the school he was working in.
- When Montgomery county schools had an employee commit a sex crime on school property (and be convicted for said crime), they did not fire him, instead transferred him to another department. He was later arrested for sexually assaulting his dog and for peeping on a neighbor's daughter.
- When Montgomery County allowed a contractor to work in 58 of its schools and he sexually assaulted a girl in the hallway. He had a prior conviction for groping women in public.
- When just two weeks ago, NBC4 broke a story Montgomery County had employed a man who lost his license in Florida for sexually abusing a teen girl. They admitted to the reporter they had not checked his references because they were too busy.

Research, good business practices, time and experience all teach us the same thing, that keeping those with a history of hurting children out of our schools is one of the single most important things we can do to prevent abuse, we must act. If our Local County Board of Education choose time and time again not to protect our children, it is time for the state to legislate what should be a no brainer. By passing this law you will make a direct and dramatic difference in keeping children safe in our schools. For the reasons stated, I respectfully urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 1072