



**SCHOLARS**  
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## Maryland HB 644: An Act Concerning Family Law - Caretaker Bill of Rights

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**Child welfare investigations are incredibly common, but disproportionately impact families of color, poor families, and families with disabled members.** Each year Maryland's Department of Human Services receives approximately 50,000 referrals, triggering investigations of between 20,000 and 30,000 children's families each year. Notably, fewer than 30% of the children investigated by Maryland authorities were ultimately deemed "victims" in 2021. While I could not locate Maryland-specific data on investigations broken out by race while preparing this testimony, nationally families of color, poor families, and families with disabled members are at starkly higher risk of experiencing an investigation than their peers. Studies consistently show that approximately half of all Black children will experience an investigation by the time they turn 18, with rates in some counties as high as 62.8%. Similarly, numerous studies have documented that parents with disabilities "have higher rates of child welfare involvement and worse outcomes than their non-disabled peers," and that this disparate impact starts with "initial referrals to child welfare." For example, a 2019 national survey found that "parents with psychiatric disabilities were eight times more likely to have contact" with the system than parents without a disability.