

SENATE BILL 567

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By: **Senator Lee**

Introduced and read first time: February 4, 2019

Assigned to: Judicial Proceedings

A BILL ENTITLED

1 AN ACT concerning

2 **Workgroup to Study Child Custody Court Decisions Involving Child Abuse or**
3 **Domestic Violence Allegations**

4 FOR the purpose of establishing the Workgroup to Study Child Custody Court Decisions
5 Involving Child Abuse or Domestic Violence Allegations; providing for the
6 composition, chair, and staffing of the Workgroup; prohibiting a member of the
7 Workgroup from receiving certain compensation, but authorizing the reimbursement
8 of certain expenses; requiring the Workgroup to study and make recommendations
9 regarding certain matters; requiring the Workgroup to report its findings and
10 recommendations to the Governor and the General Assembly on or before certain
11 dates; providing for the termination of this Act; and generally relating to the
12 Workgroup to Study Child Custody Court Decisions Involving Child Abuse or
13 Domestic Violence Allegations.

14 SECTION 1. BE IT ENACTED BY THE GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF MARYLAND,
15 That:

16 (a) There is a Workgroup to Study Child Custody Court Decisions Involving Child
17 Abuse or Domestic Violence Allegations.

18 (b) The Workgroup consists of the following members:

19 (1) two members of the Senate of Maryland, appointed by the President of
20 the Senate;

21 (2) two members of the House of Delegates, appointed by the Speaker of
22 the House;

23 (3) the Secretary of State, or the Secretary's designee;

24 (4) the Chair of the Conference of Circuit Court Judges, or the Chair's

EXPLANATION: CAPITALS INDICATE MATTER ADDED TO EXISTING LAW.

[Brackets] indicate matter deleted from existing law.



1 designee; and

2 (5) the following members, appointed by the Governor:

- 3 (i) three representatives of child advocacy nonprofit organizations;
- 4 (ii) one representative of the Maryland State's Attorneys'
5 Association;
- 6 (iii) one attorney specializing in family law matters;
- 7 (iv) one prosecutor who handles primarily child abuse cases;
- 8 (v) one representative of the Department of Human Services;
- 9 (vi) one representative of Child Advocacy Centers;
- 10 (vii) one retired circuit court judge;
- 11 (viii) one trauma recovery and education expert;
- 12 (ix) one nonoffending parent who has been involved in a child abuse
13 matter and has taken legal action to protect the nonoffending parent's children; and
- 14 (x) one individual appointed at the Governor's discretion.

15 (c) The Secretary of State, or the Secretary's designee, shall chair the Workgroup.

16 (d) The Department of Legislative Services shall provide staff for the Workgroup.

17 (e) A member of the Workgroup:

18 (1) may not receive compensation as a member of the Workgroup; but

19 (2) is entitled to reimbursement for expenses under the Standard State
20 Travel Regulations, as provided in the State budget.

21 (f) The Workgroup shall:

22 (1) study State child custody court decisions involving child abuse or
23 domestic violence allegations;

24 (2) study available science pertaining to children in traumatic situations,
25 including trauma-informed decision making; and

26 (3) make recommendations about how State courts could incorporate the
27 latest science in making legal determinations regarding the safety and well-being of

1 children.

2 (g) On or before December 1, 2019, the Workgroup shall submit an interim report
3 of its findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of
4 the State Government Article, the General Assembly.

5 (h) On or before June 1, 2020, the Workgroup shall submit a final report of its
6 findings and recommendations to the Governor and, in accordance with § 2-1246 of the
7 State Government Article, the General Assembly.

8 SECTION 2. AND BE IT FURTHER ENACTED, That this Act shall take effect June
9 1, 2019. It shall remain effective for a period of 1 year and 6 months and, at the end of
10 November 30, 2020, this Act, with no further action required by the General Assembly,
11 shall be abrogated and of no further force and effect.