MEMORANDUM IN SUPPORT
S.902/A.2479

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy urges New York’s legislature to pass S.902/A.2479, to require reporters to the State Central Register to confidentially provide their name and contact information, ending the state’s practice of accepting anonymous reports.

The Schuyler Center for Analysis and Advocacy is a 150-year-old statewide, nonprofit organization dedicated to policy analysis and advocacy in support of public systems that meet the needs of disenfranchised populations and people living in poverty. Schuyler Center strongly supports S.902/A.2479, to require reporters to the State Central Register to confidentially provide their name and contact information, ending New York’s practice of accepting anonymous reports.

Each year, anonymous reports to the State Central Register of Child Abuse and Maltreatment (SCR) lead to thousands of unnecessary, traumatic investigations into New York families, which are eventually determined to be unfounded. These investigations are extremely stressful to parents and harmful to children.

The harms of the unnecessary investigations based on false reports fall disproportionately on Black and Brown New Yorkers earning low incomes. The New York State Bar Association concluded in a report on racial justice in March 2022 that it is an “urgent imperative to end the unnecessary disruption and destruction of Black families caused by the child welfare system.”

To help address this urgent issue, the Bar Association specifically called on legislators to prohibit anonymous reports to the State Central Register.

Domestic violence survivors are among the New Yorkers particularly vulnerable to malicious SCR reports under the current anonymous reporting system. This system enables abusers to use New York’s child welfare system as means to repeatedly harass survivors and their children.

The Anti-Harassment in Reporting bill, S.902/A.2479, offers a simple solution that will substantially cut down on malicious false reporting by requiring callers who make allegations of child abuse and neglect to provide their names and contact information. The law provides strict confidentiality to those who make reports—the information can only be accessed by the Office of Children and Family Services and counties—and will deter some of those who would otherwise make false reports, while allowing Child Protective Services to better assess allegations.

June 6, 2023

2 Id. at 28.