**Year-Long Investigation Reveals Pennsylvania ChildLine Registry Should Be Abolished**

**PHILADELPHIA, AUGUST 22, 2023** – A year-long investigation into the Pennsylvania ChildLine Registry concludes it should be abolished, according to a report released today by students and faculty in the Civil Practice Clinic at the University of Pennsylvania Carey Law School and the Social Justice Lawyering Clinic at the Sheller Center for Social Justice at the Temple University Beasley School of Law. The report, *Pathways to Poverty: How the ChildLine and Abuse Registry Disproportionately Harms Black Workers and Families,* reveals that rather than protect children, the Registry acts in opposition with children’s best interests as it blocks their parents from job opportunities and keeps families trapped in the cycle of poverty.

Based on a collection of data from governmental agencies, private employer surveys, and conversations with impacted individuals, including clients of Community Legal Services of Philadelphia, the report found that Black Pennsylvanians are represented on the Registry at nearly twice their proportion in the general population. Further, it found that Black Pennsylvanians are more likely to be reported for child abuse, be placed on the Registry, and lose a job as a result.

“While Black Pennsylvanians represent 12% of the state population, they are 22% of those placed on the Registry,” said Jennifer Lee, former Visiting Practice Professor of Law at Penn Carey Law, and Associate Professor of Law at Temple, who supervised the research. “That inequity compounds the barriers Black workers already face and hurts their ability to support their families.”

The report highlights how the Registry system provides ample opportunities for racism, denies procedural fairness to the accused, and ultimately traps children and families in a cycle of poverty. As the data shows, determinations of child abuse are inherently discretionary and can be infected with racial bias. Further, the process of adding people to the Registry is opaque.

“We found that employers often do not understand the laws and take a risk-averse approach to background checks, even when it means denying jobs to qualified candidates,” said Coco Xu, a Penn Carey Law student who worked on the report. “People on the Registry—especially Black women—often find themselves locked out of professions even if they are not directly caring for children.”

The report also offers suggestions for reform such as: evaluating the role of racial bias in child abuse investigations, instituting procedural safeguards for placement on the Registry, and limiting employer consideration of the Registry to jobs that involve direct caregiving of children.

“People added to the Registry have no right to legal counsel, do not get a hearing before being listed on the Registry, and are not adequately informed about the consequences of being on the Registry,” said Joan Fernandez, a Temple Law student who contributed to the research. “Yet once on the Registry, people remain on it for life.”

The release of the report comes on the heels of the recent *S.F. v. PA DHS* decision, in which the Commonwealth Court of Pennsylvania ruled that teachers must be provided with a hearing before they can be placed on the ChildLine Registry as perpetrators of child abuse.

“Our hope is that this report will help continue to build momentum and encourage lawmakers to address unjust practices and inequities in Pennsylvania’s child abuse registry system that block primarily low wage Black and Brown workers from employment,” said Jamie Gullen, Managing Attorney of Employment and Youth Justice at Community Legal Services.

[Read a copy of the report here](https://www.law.upenn.edu/live/files/12705-pathways-to-poverty-how-the-childline-and-abuse).