
BILL NO: House Bill 246
TITLE: Sexual Solicitation of a Minor – Solicitation Through Parent, Guardian, or Custodian – Prohibition and Penalties
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: January 28, 2020
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

House Bill 246 would make it a crime to solicit a parent, custodian, or guardian of a minor if they are intentionally seeking to engage in illegal sexual acts. The Women's Law Center (WLC) supports this bill as an appropriate punishment for sexual predators seeking to harm minors.

Clearly, preying upon minors for one's sexual gratification is heinous. And the potentially life-long negative consequences for childhood victims of sexual assault and other inappropriate behavior is well-known. The additional trauma and burden to a survivors if their parent or guardian was involved is unimaginable. In our limited experience in the arena of human trafficking, this is sometimes the early foray into a person being trafficked.

In the United States the victims of child prostitution can be from any background, race, gender, ethnicity, socio-economic status, and neighborhood. Many of these children are from unstable homes that may be emotionally, physically or sexually abusive, although a great many are from seemingly "normal" homes as well. The children may be enticed to leave their home by a person offering false promises of "something better" *while others may run away or are "thrown away" by their parents/caregivers, thus leaving them little to no options for survival.* (Justice.gov, FAQs, last viewed 1-25-2020) (emphasis added).

Criminalizing this type of behavior may save young peoples' lives.

For these reasons, the WLC supports HB246 and urges a favorable report.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change. The Women's Law Center operates two hotlines, Protection Order Advocacy and Representation Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County and the Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Project.