



House Judiciary Committee

February 20, 2020

IN SUPPORT OF HB 0974:
Civil Actions - Child Sexual Abuse - Definition and Statute of Limitations
(Hidden Predator Act of 2020)

To: Chairman Luke Clippinger and House Judicial Committee Chair Members

From: Citizens Review Board for Children

Thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of HB 0974 because it is legislation crucial in the protection of present, and future, victims of sexual abuse and allows recourse, previously restricted, to hold predators not yet identified accountable for the harm they have caused.

The Citizens Review Board for Children (CRBC) is a federally mandated citizen review panel that provides oversight for child welfare, and consists of Governor appointed volunteers representing the 23 counties and Baltimore City. We are charged with examining the policies, practices, and procedures of Maryland's child protective services and make recommendations for systemic improvement. CRBC also advocates for efforts that protects survivors of abuse, and supports tools to address the trauma they have experienced.

Since the national recognition of ACEs (Adverse Childhood Experiences), the CDC (Center for Disease Control) has compiled data between 2011-2014. The prevalence of sexual abuse experienced by adult participants in the ACE Module Behavioral Risk Factor Surveillance System (BRFSS) in 23 states indicates that 11.6% of adults have been exposed to sexual abuse among all form of abuse. Woman, in particular were subjected to sexual trauma at a rate of 16.3% compared to 6.7% of their male counterparts. Present data suggests, the average age of child sexual abuse disclosure is 52 years old.

Youth survivors grow up with this trauma and represent some of the most vulnerable populations because of the social and economic circumstances they have endured. They often grow up struggling with mental health challenges ranging from depression to episodes of suicidal ideations. They are subjected to higher rates of STDs and unintended pregnancies. The young adult survivor may also engage in a pattern of unsafe sexual behavior or battle substance abuse. For these survivors, pathways to healing are vital to undo the damage of such childhood traumas.

HB 0974 is critical in affording sexual abuse survivors the opportunity to seek justice where the statute of limitations once barred them. This bill allows survivors the ability to have their story told, and confront their abusers once they are ready without the restriction or protections granted the predator. This bill would protect current, and future, sexual abuse victims from predators that have been hidden or protected by current constitutional provisions. Moreover, HB 0974 equips trusted adults with the tools to empower young and adult victims to expose individuals who have preyed upon them, and shines a light on the dangers of sexual abuse within their community or the public at large.

Removal of the bar on non-claim statutes sends a powerful message so the courts, the

community, and survivors know that our lawmakers recognize the need to remove those protections, and provisions that have shielded predators, or individuals and organizations that have been complicit in hiding them. That message is long overdue and much needed to convey the State of Maryland will no longer tolerate predators in our neighborhoods and schools, exhibit the commitment to advance the goals of preventing future victimization, and to aide in the healing of those already victimized.

For these reasons, on behalf of CRBC, we encourage a favorable report on HB 0974.

Citizens Review Board for Children

1100 Eastern Boulevard, Baltimore, Maryland 21221 * Phone: (410) 238-1320 * Fax: (410) 238-1395

email: crbc.mail.maryland.gov website: <http://dhr.maryland.gov/crbc>