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January 30, 2023

The Honorable William Smith & Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Chairperson, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairperson Smith and JPR Committee Members:

I write to you today in support of SB57- Sexual Offenses- Crime of Violence and Lifetime Supervision. I am a prosecutor in Calvert County, and I handle all of the Child Sexual Abuse cases in our county. I am a member of the Calvert County Child Advocacy Center Multidisciplinary Team, and have handled numerous cases of child sexual abuse in my 19 years as a prosecutor. I urge a favorable report on SB57.

Under Maryland Criminal Law 3-602, a person who is a parent, family member, household member, or another person with care and custody may not sexually abuse a minor child. Sexual abuse can be anything from exploitation to rape under this statute. Currently, this crime is not considered a crime of violence under Criminal law 14-101 if the victim is 13 or older. This means that an offender only needs to serve 25% of their sentence before they are eligible for parole. HB0164 would make Sexual Abuse of a Minor a crime of violence for those victims under 16 years old if the offender is over 21 years old.

I recently had a case where a Defendant was given a 30 year active sentence for two convictions of Sexual Abuse of a Minor involving the same victim. This sentence sounds good on paper, but because the victim was not under 13, the offender will only do approximately 7 ½ years before he is eligible for parole. This is unacceptable. If HB0164 had been in effect, this Defendant would have to do 15 years before parole eligibility.

Child sexual abuse deeply impacts our children. Survivors of child sexual abuse experience long term effects such as depression, anxiety, guilt, shame, self-blame, sleeping disorders, eating disorders, and interpersonal relationship problems. It shatters their innocence and robs them of their security. It is a violent crime no matter what the age of the child.

Sexual abuse of a minor is no less of a crime of violence when a child is 13-15 years old. It is our duty to protect the most vulnerable members of our community from those who victimize them.

I strongly urge this Committee to issue a favorable report on SB57.

Sincerely,

*Rebecca Cordero*

Rebecca Cordero  
Senior Assistant State's Attorney  
Calvert County State's Attorney's Office