



THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Good afternoon Mr. Chair, Mr. Vice Chair, and my esteemed colleagues on the Judiciary Committee. I am here to present HB 164, "Sexual Offenses – Crime of Violence and Lifetime Supervision." This bill was introduced last year by my district mate Senator Jack Bailey, as SB 68. Last year, this bill passed the Senate.

This bill is a direct response to multiple cases in St. Mary's County and Southern Maryland, where people convicted of sexually abusing minors, had served their sentences and were no longer on probation, and who then reoffended and sexually abused minor children again.

Under current law, sexual abuse of a minor is only considered a crime of violence when the minor is under 13 years old. Those offenders are eligible for parole after serving at least 50% of their sentence. When sexual abuse is committed against a minor between the ages of 13 and 15, it is not considered a crime of violence, so the offender is eligible for parole after serving only 25% of their sentence.

This bill will change that. It will make sexual abuse of a minor a crime of violence when the minor is 13 years old, or when the minor is 14 or 15 years old and the offender is at least 21 years old. That means that those offenders will not be eligible for parole until they have served at least 50% of their sentence.

This bill only applies to cases where the offender had care and custody of their victim. That includes parents, teachers, coaches, and other trusted adults who have authority over a child. This bill does not cover statutory rape scenarios where a 21-year-old is "dating" a 15-year-old.

In addition, under current law, offenders who commit sexual abuse of a minor under the age of 12 are subject to lifetime sexual offender supervision. This bill would raise the required age of the minor by one year. Under this bill, offenders who commit sexual abuse of a minor under the age of 13 would be subject to lifetime sexual offender supervision.

In addition, this bill stipulates that in cases where the minor victim is between 13 and 15 years old, lifetime sexual offender supervision would apply when the offender is 21 years old or older. "Lifetime" doesn't have to mean lifetime. After five years, people who have been sentenced to lifetime sexual offender supervision have the ability to petition each year to be removed from supervision.

Again, this bill is a direct response to heinous cases where a trusted adult who had authority over a child, sexually abused that child, finished out their sentence and finished out their probation, and then sexually abused another child.

I have assembled a panel of witnesses who are experts on this bill, who will explain its intricacies to you, and who can answer any questions you may have.
Thank you very much for your consideration of this bill.