



## VICTIM SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

February 2, 2023

The Honorable Luke Clippinger  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee  
Room 101, House Office Building  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support – HB 174 – Criminal Procedure - Victims of Sexually Assaultive Behavior

Dear Chairman Clippinger:

House Bill 174 alters Maryland law to require, under certain circumstances, an assistant State's Attorney to explain the State's Attorney's decision not to prosecute a suspect accused of engaging in criminal sexual assault. Specifically, House Bill 174 would require an assistant State's Attorney to meet with a sexual assault victim upon request when the State's Attorney decides not to prosecute, or to dismiss, a case against a sexual assault suspect, so that the State's Attorney has to explain, to the victim herself or himself or the victim's designated representative, why that decision was made.

The Montgomery County Victim Services Advisory Board (VSAB) advises the Montgomery County Council and County Executive on assisting the needs of victims of a broad range of violent crimes, including rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. The number and severity of sexual assault and domestic violence cases referred to Montgomery County HHS Trauma Services increased substantially during the COVID-19 pandemic. This is consistent with data showing violent crime has risen nationally over the last few years, leading to increased prosecutions.

Standing up to an abuser takes incredible courage. This is particularly true for victims of sexual assault, who are especially vulnerable members of our community. They are often reluctant to report instances of sexual assault because the abuser may well be someone they know, or even love, in the case of intimate partner violence. House Bill 174, when passed into law, will ensure that when a sexual assault victim has shown the courage to report a sexual assault to the police and the State's Attorney's office, the State's Attorney's office will have the corresponding courage to speak with the victim and explain why a decision not to prosecute was made in his or her case. Victims of sexual assault deserve that kind of honesty and forthrightness from their government officials. Simply put, it is the right thing to do.

Accordingly, VSAB asks the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 174.

Sincerely,

Brian D. Koosed  
VSAB Co-chair

Department of Health and Human Services