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Judicial Proceedings Committee



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
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**SB 294 – Protection of Identity of Victim of Sexual Assault or Stalking**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher, colleagues on JPR:

In 2024 Senator Sydnor sponsored, and the General Assembly passed, SB 111, protecting the identity of minors who were victims of crimes. SB 294 builds on that important privacy protection by protecting the identity of sexual assault and stalking victims, regardless of age.

Currently, the name of any adult victim of sexual assault or stalking named in a court case is easily accessible to the public. While several entities redact this information, it is still available, especially through public-facing kiosks in courthouses. SB 294 would require the names of sexual assault and stalking victims to be automatically redacted from public documents without forcing victims to go through the arduous legal process of petitioning the courts to protect their identity. It would still allow defendants and their attorneys to have access to this information, and would allow a court, upon a showing of clear and convincing evidence of good cause, to allow inspection of the documents with a victim's identifying information. The bill also allows victims of sexual assault and/or stalking to petition a court to order redaction of their own identifying information from existing filings or records, restoring to victims a modicum of control over their own lives.

As this Committee is aware, sexual assault is already vastly underreported, and the stigma surrounding these crimes often discourages victims from pressing charges. When faced with the additional threat of having their identity exposed during legal proceedings, survivors frequently opt not to pursue prosecution because they fear retaliation and harassment. We should be doing everything in our power to ensure that Maryland shields the identity of sexual assault survivors and ensure that they are not further victimized while trying to seek justice. Sexual assault and stalking victims lose some of the most fundamental aspects of our daily lives, including privacy, safety, autonomy, and the ability to move through the world without constant fear. SB 294 is important not only in protecting survivors, but also in recognizing that survivors should be the ones who decide whether and when their identity is shared.

For these reasons, I respectfully request your favorable report on SB 294.