



BARBARA REILLY/COURTESY

Lilly Reilly, a 5-year-old labradoodle, was the first therapy dog to take the witness stand in a Maryland court when she assisted a victim in Anne Arundel County Circuit Court Wednesday.

## DOG

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Erin Bogan said she's also seen the difference dogs like Lily can make. Bogan is the marketing coordinator for Dogwood Acres Pet Retreat in Davidsonville, which certifies volunteer therapy dogs through its Caring Canines program.

"The comforting presence they have helps the child get out of their head and feel more confident and comforted and safe," Bogan said. "It gives them a little bit of solace through whatever they're going through."

The Courthouse Dog and Child Witness Pilot Program has been part of Anne

Arundel and Harford county courts since February 2018. Child witnesses eligible for the program are identified by the state's attorney's office, a best interest attorney or a Court Appointed Special Advocate volunteer who sends a request to the court's administrative judge for approval.

Sen. Bryan Simonaire, a Pasadena Republican, is preparing to bring a statewide version of the program to the General Assembly in next year's session for the second time since 2016. The program would be voluntary and set up protocols for any county that wants to use it, Simonaire said.

"I'm thrilled to see a vision actually become reality," Simonaire said. "We're hopeful it goes statewide this year so we can help more children. That's the real goal of this legislation."

# Meet Lily, the first dog to take witness stand in Anne Arundel

BY SELENE SAN FELICE

At first glance, Lily Reilly looks like just another cute girl. But don't be mistaken: She's a working woman with a rough job.

Lily, a 5-year-old labradoodle, was the first of her Caring Canines colleagues to take the witness stand in a Maryland court Nov. 7, comforting a child while she testified as a rape survivor in Anne Arundel County Circuit Court.

Lily can't take people's trauma away, but she can put her head in their lap as they recount the worst moment of their lives. And that sweet, calming presence can make a world of a difference for victims, said her handler Barb Reilly, who stood next to the witness stand holding Lily's leash and

escorted her through the court.

"In other cases, she sits in the courtroom... But this was different. This was a much bigger case," Reilly said. "I think the child really, really appreciated having the dog there. It gave her a chance to decompress."

Lily's presence doesn't just help victims — it also can make for a clearer case. The more comfortable young victims are, the more confident they become, which means they can open up and share more of their story, Reilly said.

"The dogs are really able to bring down anxiety a little bit. Sometimes kids can open up a little bit better," Reilly said. "It's amazing what the dogs can do."

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Lily the labradoodle and her handler, Barbara Reilly. Lily was the first therapy dog to take the witness stand in a Maryland court after helping a victim Wednesday.