

Jeffrey A. Harrison

Bill Number: HB 764

Date: February 25, 2020

Bill Title: Criminal Law - Law Enforcement Officers
- Prohibition on Sexual Activity

Committee: House Judiciary

Position: SUPPORT

Contact: Delegate Nicole Williams

Dear Committee Chair Clippinger, Committee Vice-Chair Atterbeary, and Committee Members:

I strongly support HB 764.

HB 764 clarifies current legal ambiguities and protects vulnerable human beings in Maryland.

These vulnerable human beings are our family members, friends, and neighbors: incarcerated individuals; institutionalized individuals; individuals interfacing with law-enforcement officers; individuals dependent on life-sustaining service providers; and minors.

With few exceptions, a vulnerable person is unable to give their consent to sexual activity in situations where there is a large difference in power between the vulnerable individual and someone in authority, such as a corrections officer, a law-enforcement officer, or various kinds of service providers for adults and minors.

Without consent, sexual activity between a person in authority and a vulnerable person is sexual assault, a crime.

A search of news media reveals that sexual activity between vulnerable individuals and people in authority is disturbingly prevalent. Injustice often occurs because of ambiguities in existing laws or because prosecutors, judges, and juries interpret existing laws in favor of those in authority, without regard for the vulnerable. Many more cases do not reach the news media, because vulnerable people are rarely heard.

HB 764 will reduce the number of times a vulnerable human being in Maryland will be involved in sexual activity with corrections officers, law-enforcement officers, service providers, and other authorities. Vulnerable individuals will suffer less trauma as a result. In addition, less institutional corruption will result.

For the public, for the vulnerable, for those with a duty to report, for those in authority, and for prosecutors and other stakeholders in the criminal-justice system in Maryland, HB 764 clarifies any confusion there may be in the existing laws.

For those reasons, I strongly support HB 764. I recommend a FAVORABLE report from the Committee.

Thank you.

Jeffrey A. Harrison
6835 Damsel Ct., Greenbelt MD 20770, 240-604-4475, Jeff6836@gmail.com