SHELLY HETTLEMAN
Legislative District 11
Baltimore County

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Judicial Proceedings Committee

James Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street, Room 203
Annapolis, Maryland 21401
410-841-3131 · 301-858-3131
800-492-7122 *Ext.* 3131
Shelly.Hettleman@senate.state.md.us

The Senate of Maryland
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

TESTIMONY OF SENATOR SHELLY HETTLEMAN
SB 484 – Criminal Procedure -Victims of Crime – Private Room

I introduced this bill in response to an incident that happened to a young Baltimore County resident, who you will hear from today. She is going to testify in support of this bill because she does not want others to have to go through what she experienced. She was put in a very uncomfortable situation when she had to make a police report about an embarrassing incident that occurred in her place of work. The Cockeysville Police Department asked her to make her statement in an open, public lobby with multiple people present. Due to the sensitive nature of her report, this made her feel re-victimized, embarrassed, and that her privacy had been violated. Not only once, but three times, she was forced to explain her story in a room full of people whom she didn't know. At a vulnerable time, when law enforcement should be supporting victims, she was put in an uncomfortable position with no other options offered.

This bill will require law enforcement agencies to give a private area or room, upon request, for victims to talk about sensitive subjects. The bill would also require clear signage to indicate that such a space could be made available. Victims should be able to share their stories and situations in a private area that allows them to feel comfortable and able to express their truth. This is especially important for victims of sexual assault or rape. Hospitals, trauma centers, and other programs have already established these types of privacy protocols for sexual assault survivors as part of best practices.

This bill has been endorsed by the bipartisan Women's Caucus.

This straightforward legislation will ensure that crime victims have safe and secure locations, in a supportive environment that is conducive to sharing sensitive, private information. We believe Maryland's victims of crime deserve no less. I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 484. Thank you.