

SB0333- Criminal Procedure - Sexual Offenders- Lifetime Supervision- Support

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Senator Smith,

I am writing in full support of SB0333, as this bill would expand the probation term for anyone convicted of Sexual Abuse of a minor to lifetime supervision. Pedophilia is a sexual preference that harms its victims for the rest of their lives. It is imperative we do everything necessary as a society to prevent convicted predators from preying on children again. I believe SB0333 will enable probation officers to assess risk factors and guide abusers away from having the opportunity to harm another child.

Studies show that 20% of child sexual abusers have between 10 to 40 victims. Even though sex crimes are one of the most under-reported crimes (only 12% of child sexual abuse is reported), we also know that follow up studies show the rate of recidivism of sexual offenders INCREASES drastically after 5 years.

A Harvard study has claimed that pedophilia has no effective treatment. The study concludes, "While rehabilitation efforts have included decreasing sexual arousal or increasing the ability to manage that arousal, the only effective way to reduce harm is preventing access to children or PROVIDING CLOSE SUPERVISION."

Sexual predators can oftentimes be very manipulative and cunning. They can gain the trust of parents, co-workers, family, and friends by dismissing their crimes as a "misunderstanding" or one-time occurrence that will not happen again. Because of this, a probation officer may be the only person placing limits between a child and an abuser.

I took the time to review some cases on the Maryland Sex Registry List. As a mother, I was heartbroken at what I found. At least a third of the cases that I reviewed involved children. Even more heartbreaking is that a lot of them had another case that occurred after their probation period had ended.

I cannot stress enough how sexual abuse affects a child. While there may be a tendency to think of how this bill may affect the abusers, the most important factor to remember is how this bill will protect a child victim. Children who are abused are 4 times more likely to become drug abusers. They are 4 times more likely to have PTSD as adults. They are also 3 times more likely to have depressive episodes as adults. The lifetime burden cost of child sexual abuse is \$210,012 per victim. That makes sexual abuse a higher financial burden for the victim than major health conditions, like for example, diabetes.

I will end this letter on one last note. People who rape and harm children should not be left unsupervised in our communities. They should not be allowed opportunities to do more harm. They should be, at the very least, under supervision for the rest of their lives.

Sincerely,

Pamela Barnes