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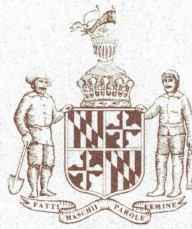
Joint Committees

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HB 1214 Maryland Child Protection Act of 2022

The purpose of this bill is to further the important and compelling state interests of:

- (1) Protecting children from sexually predatory adults;
- (2) Ensuring that adults who are involved in illegal sexual relationships or contact with children are reported, investigated, and, when warranted, prosecuted;
- (3) Relieving medical professionals and other mandatory reporters of suspected sexual crimes against children from any responsibility to personally investigate an allegation or suspicion. Mandatory reporters must simply report allegations, suspicions, and pertinent facts. Trained law enforcement or social services personnel will then be responsible for any investigation and for the ultimate disposition of the allegations or cases;
- (4) Reducing the physical, emotional, developmental, and psychological impact of sexual crimes on child victims;
- (5) Reducing the societal and economic burdens on the populace that result from sexual crimes against children;
- (6) Providing law enforcement officials with the tools and evidence necessary to investigate and prosecute child predators; and

- (7) Protecting and respecting the right of parents and guardians to be involved in the medical decisions and treatment of their children and preventing anyone from knowingly or willfully subverting or circumventing these rights.

This bill is needed because:

- (1) Children are increasingly being preyed upon, victimized, and coerced into illegal sexual relationships by adults.
- (2) State law should require caretakers, healthcare facilities, healthcare providers, teachers, and other specified individuals to report suspected incidents of sexual crimes against children.
- (3) However, many of these suspected criminal acts go unreported, and perpetrators are not investigated or prosecuted.
- (4) Maryland may better prevent future sexual crimes against children by investigating, prosecuting, incarcerating, and treating those who prey upon and victimize children.
- (5) To prevent future and continuing sexual crimes against children, all suspected crimes of this nature must be reported to state investigators and agencies that are specifically trained and equipped to professionally, thoroughly, and compassionately investigate cases of suspected crimes against children, relieving mandatory reporters of any investigatory responsibility.
- (6) The physical, emotional, developmental, and psychological impact of sexual crimes on child victims can be severe and long-lasting.
- (7) The societal costs of these crimes are also significant and affect the entire populace.
- (8) The collection, maintenance, and preservation of evidence, including forensic tissue samples, furthers Maryland's interest in protecting children from sexual crimes and provides the State with a necessary tool for successful investigations and prosecutions.

- (9) Parents and guardians have both the right and responsibility to be involved in medical treatment decisions involving their children, and no one has the right to knowingly or willfully impede or circumvent this right.
- (10) There are documented cases of individuals other than a parent or guardian aiding, abetting, and assisting minor girls to procure abortions without their parents' or guardians' knowledge, consent, or involvement. This includes transporting children across state lines to avoid Maryland's parental notification requirements for abortion.
- (11) Such actions violate both the sanctity of the familial relationship and Maryland's parental notification law for abortion.

PLEASE ENTER A FAVORABLE REPORT FOR HB 1214.