



Testimony Concerning SB 686
“Civil Actions - Child Sexual Abuse - Definition and Statute of Limitations (The
Child Victims Act of 2023)”
Submitted to the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee
February 23, 2023

Position: Support

Maryland Family Network (MFN) supports SB 686, which would eliminate the civil statute of limitations on child sexual abuse, create a temporary “look-back window” for victims who were previously barred from seeking redress by the existing statute of limitations, and clarify that those who perpetrate child sexual abuse are not entitled to constitutionally protected property rights.

As Maryland's largest and oldest statewide child advocacy organization, MFN is strongly committed to ensuring the health and well-being of children across our state. MFN has worked since 1945 to improve the quality of life for Maryland children and their families. We are committed to a process that identifies and addresses factors affecting the well-being of children and youth, including the prevention of child abuse and neglect.

Studies indicate that one in five girls and one in 13 boys will experience child sexual abuse. Recent research also shows that adverse experiences faced in childhood change the structure and function of brains and have lasting impacts into adulthood. The trauma associated with childhood sexual abuse too often leads to PTSD, alcohol and opioid abuse, depression, suicide, and poor educational and employment outcomes. The impact is felt by individuals and by society as a whole. According to the CDC, the economic burden of child sexual abuse is over \$9 billion annually.

Maryland has no criminal statute of limitations for felonies, including those involving child sexual abuse. However, criminal and civil proceedings provide different remedies, and both are necessary for justice to be served. Certainly, we can all agree that survivors should have every option available to heal. Not only does this bill provide support and access for adult survivors, it provides preventative protection to children. In states such as California, Delaware, and Minnesota where “look-back windows” have been opened, hidden predators have been exposed.

MFN respectfully urges the Committee’s favorable consideration of SB 686.