

KAREN LEWIS YOUNG  
*Legislative District 3*  
Frederick County

---

Committee on Education, Energy,  
and the Environment



James Senate Office Building  
11 Bladen Street, Room 302  
Annapolis, Maryland 21401  
410-841-3575 · 301-858-3575  
800-492-7122 Ext. 3575  
Karen.Young@senate.state.md.us

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND  
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

February 20, 2023

Support of SB 391 – Criminal Procedure – Victims of Sexually Assaultive Behavior

The Honorable William C. Smith, Chair

Judiciary Committee

Maryland Senate

11 Bladen Street, Room 302

Annapolis, MD 21401

Chair Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and Esteemed Members of the Judiciary Committee:

Senate Bill 391 improves the communication process for survivors of sexual assault when they are informed that prosecutors are declining to charge their attackers. The same bills (House Bill #270 – 2021 and House Bill #225 - 2022) passed the House of Delegates. However, they were not voted on in the Senate.

After conversations with a constituent who reported a sexual assault, I drafted this legislation with the input of an advocacy group as well as an Assistant State's Attorney. The Chief of Police in my district also voiced a strong need for this legislation.

In this particular case, the State's Attorney initially chose not to file charges and did not contact the survivor with an explanation. Under this legislation, the survivor has the right to request a meeting with an Assistant State's Attorney (ASA) with knowledge of the case. That meeting is required to occur within twenty days of the request, at which time the ASA can explain why the office did not move forward and answer questions of the survivor.

According to the U.S. Justice Department, only 23% of survivors report their assault, and only 20% of those reports lead to charges. Some survivors report hearing nothing after filing charges against their assailant. The Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) report that 995 of every 1000 sexual assault perpetrators will never face prison.

Women of color and LGBTQ+ people are disproportionately affected by sexual assault and are less likely to report their attackers. With the majority of reported cases of sexual assault never leading to arrests or prosecution, countless survivors face the daunting task of sharing the stories

of their attacks to police officers and prosecutors, only for prosecutors to decline pressing charges.

Maryland can make a statement of support for sexual assault survivors by reforming and improving this process. For these reasons, I urge you to support SB 391, and I request a favorable report.

Thank you,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Karen Lewis Young". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Karen Lewis Young