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January 27, 2023

The Honorable Luke Clippinger  
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee  
6 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairman Clippinger:

I write to you today in support of HB0126- Visual Surveillance with Prurient Interest- Minor Victim. I am a prosecutor in Calvert County. I am a member of the Calvert County Child Advocacy Center Multidisciplinary Team and I have handled numerous cases of child sexual abuse and child exploitation cases in my 19 years as a prosecutor. I urge a favorable report on HB0126.

Maryland Criminal Law Section 3-902 prohibits a person from conducting visual surveillance of another in a private place without their consent, or the private area of an individual by use of a camera where the individual would believe that their private area is not visible to the public. The statute requires that the offender possess prurient intent- that is, they are doing it for sexual reasons. The maximum penalty for this statute is only one year. HB0126 would increase the penalty to 5 years if the victim is a minor child.

During my career, I have had numerous cases where sexual offenders hid their phones or other recording devices in bathrooms or bedrooms to capture naked images of minor children. I recently had a case where an offender was visiting his family. He surreptitiously hid his cellphone in a bathroom vent in order to obtain a video of a young girl who was showering. Unfortunately, the Defendant was only sentenced to a year of incarceration for this particular offense. The victim's family was astonished that the penalty is so low for this offense, especially when the victim is a minor child.

Offenders who are so bold to hide a camera with the intent to capture these types of images of a minor for their own sexual desires do not deserve the benefit of such a low penalty. We must protect our youngest victims from these sexual predators. A year in jail will not do that.

I strongly urge this Committee to issue a favorable report on HB0126.

Sincerely,

*Rebecca Cordero*

Rebecca Cordero  
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Calvert County State's Attorney's Office