

March 19, 2024

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

Dear Chairperson Clippinger and Members of the Judiciary Committee:

My name is Cheryl Grady and I am a resident of Frederick County (21701). In addition, I am the mother of a child abuse survivor. I am writing to respectfully request the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 141 - Criminal Procedure – Child Abuse Victim – Testimony Taken Outside the Courtroom. Thank you for the opportunity to share my testimony in writing.

If this process had been in place several years ago, my young son would not have had to sit in the courtroom to testify against his abuser. As the victim in the trial, my young son had to sit mere feet away from the defendant. My young son had to face the emotional challenge of having to talk about being abused in front of strangers. He also had to face the emotional struggle of testifying against a formerly trusted adult family member. The most tragic thing was that I was unable to be in the courtroom with my young son to support him. This is because I was also a testifying witness in the trial. As a mom, it was the hardest thing in the world to have to tell him to be brave and then have to walk away. To this day, even though he is now a young adult, he continues to say that it was the worst day of his life. He says that it was worse than the actual acts of abuse. In fact, he often asks to take detours away from the courthouse when we are traveling in the vicinity of it. It feels awful that in order to seek justice, we had to subject him to more trauma.

A young child should have the opportunity to testify. In addition, I understand the right of the accused to confront the accuser. However, it is important to understand how much more the process of justice can add to what will already be lifelong trauma. My young son's trauma was intensified by having to testify in front of his abuser. It also required him to receive expanded and extended therapy in order to address it. And as written above, there is, still today, a constant physical reminder of it in the middle of our city.

I appreciate you taking the time to read my son's story and respectfully urge this committee to return a favorable report on HB141.