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Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.
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Testimony in Support of Maryland House Bill 613: Protection of Identity of Victims of Sexual Assault

Mr. Chair and Delegates of the Judiciary Committee. Please accept this testimony as strong support for House Bill 613, which seeks to afford additional privacy rights to victims of sexual assault. This bill is a crucial step in ensuring that victims are protected from further trauma and that their privacy is respected throughout the judicial process. Many thanks to Delegate Guyton on behalf of all Maryland victims and survivors.

Background and Purpose: House Bill 613 aims to prohibit the parties and the court in criminal proceedings from releasing any identifying information about the victim of sexual assault without a court finding good cause to do so. This measure is designed to safeguard the privacy and dignity of victims, who often face significant emotional and psychological challenges in the aftermath of their assault.

Arguments in Favor of HB 613:

1. Protection from Re-traumatization:

- Victims of sexual assault frequently experience re-traumatization when their identities are disclosed. The public exposure can lead to additional emotional distress, social stigma, and even harassment. [By ensuring that identifying information is kept confidential, HB 613 helps to protect victims from these harmful consequences¹.](#)

2. Encouraging Reporting of Sexual Assault:

- Many victims of sexual assault are hesitant to report the crime due to fear of public exposure and the potential for their identities to be revealed. [By providing stronger privacy protections, HB 613 can encourage more victims to come forward and report their assaults, knowing that their identities will be safeguarded².](#)

3. Aligning with Best Practices:

- Numerous states have already implemented similar privacy protections for victims of sexual assault. These measures have been shown to be effective in protecting victims' rights and promoting a more supportive judicial process. [Maryland should follow suit by adopting HB 613 to align with these best practices³.](#)

4. Legal Precedents and Support:

- Legal precedents support the need for enhanced privacy protections for victims of sexual assault. Courts have recognized the importance of protecting victims' identities to prevent further harm and to uphold their rights to privacy. HB 613 is consistent with these legal principles and reinforces the commitment to victim protection.

5. Support from Advocacy Groups:

- Advocacy groups for victims of sexual assault, such as the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA), have long advocated for stronger privacy protections. These organizations understand the profound impact that public

exposure can have on victims and strongly support measures like HB 613 that prioritize victim privacy.

Conclusion: In conclusion, House Bill 613 is a vital piece of legislation that addresses the critical need for enhanced privacy protections for victims of sexual assault. By prohibiting the release of identifying information without a court finding good cause, this bill ensures that victims are treated with the dignity and respect they deserve. I urge the members of the Judiciary Committee to support HB 613 and to take a stand for the rights and well-being of sexual assault victims in Maryland.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Kurt W. Wolfgang
Executive Director
For All Maryland Victims and Survivors