

February 4, 2025

Delegate Luke Clippinger
Chairman, House Judiciary Committee
6 Bladen Street
Annapolic, MD 21401

Dear Chairperson and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

My name is Cheryl Grady and I am a resident of Frederick County. I am the president of the Friends of the Child Advocacy Center of Frederick County and I am the mother of a child abuse survivor. I am here today to respectfully request the committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 293 - Criminal Procedure - Child Victims - Testimony in Child Abuse Cases.

If this process had been in place several years ago, my son would not have had to sit in the courtroom to testify against his abuser. As the victim in the trial, my son had to sit mere feet away from the defendant. It was the first time he had seen him since being violently attacked at the age of 11. My son had to face the emotional challenge of having to be questioned about his abuse in front of strangers while being watched by the person who abused him. It was made even harder given that my son has anxiety and is on the autism spectrum. But what was most tragic was that I was unable to be in the courtroom to support him because I was also a testifying witness in the trial. As a mom, it was the worst thing in the world to have to tell my son 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 and assault. To this day, I feel awful that in order to help my son seek justice, we had to subject him to even more trauma. And he was only 11 years old.

A young child should have the opportunity to testify to seek justice. 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. I believe that, unfortunately and without intentionality, to a child it can seem like a team of people have joined with the defendant to continue to abuse them. My son's trauma was intensified by having to testify in front of his abuser. It required him to need months of therapy in order to prepare for the trial. It also required him to need months of extended therapy in order to heal from it. He asked me to come here today to help make sure that other children will not have to suffer like he did. This can be so easily modified for future children. Thank you for taking the time to hear his story. Please issue a favorable report for House Bill 293.

Sincerely,

Cheryl Grady