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Judiciary Committee



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THE MARYLAND HOUSE OF DELEGATES
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Favorable: HB 442 – Criminal Procedure – Victims and Witnesses – Out of Court Statement of Child to Forensic Interviewer

Hearing on 2/06/2025 at 1:00pm

To: Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Bartlett and my Fellow Members of the Judiciary Committee

As a former child protective services specialist and someone who worked across Maryland’s jurisdictions to improve our child protection system, I have seen the challenges and trauma children face when navigating our legal system in search for safety.

The purpose of HB442—Criminal Procedure—Victims and Witnesses—Out-of-Court Statement of Child to Forensic Interviewer—is to expand the Maryland provision for the out-of-court statements of child victims or witnesses—often referred to as the “tender years statute”—which serves as a statutory exception to the hearsay rule.

The already law provides a necessary safeguard that allows children’s admission of out-of-court statements made to certain professionals. This safeguard reduces the trauma of repeated questioning and aligns Maryland with best practices in safeguarding children in criminal justice proceedings.

HB442 adds qualified forensic interviewers to the list of professionals qualified to share a child’s out-of-court statements.

Similar legislation has not been introduced in recent years.

The bill defines a “forensic interviewer” as a professional who (1) is trained in child forensic interviewing protocols and techniques suitable for gathering information from children without influencing their responses, (2) is not a law enforcement officer, and (3) is employed by or works under contract with a child advocacy center or a similar entity in another jurisdiction that qualifies as a child advocacy center in the state.

In conclusion, I respectfully request a **favorable** report for HB 442 – Criminal Procedure – Victims and Witnesses – Out-of-Court Statement of Child to Forensic Interviewer. This bill seeks to rebuild the framework for supporting young victims and ensuring that their voices are heard. Thank you for your time and consideration.