



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.

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LETTER IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 566

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On behalf of the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC), I am writing to express our strong support for House Bill 566. MCVRC provides legal services for crime victims throughout Maryland and is the largest nonprofit of its kind in the country. We write on behalf of our ever-increasing number of clients who have suffered as a result of identity theft and our young clients who have had their images and names used without their consent for the reckless gratification of the offender.

One specific client was part of a group of six girls who all had their names and images used by an offender, not for financial gain but rather for his own perverse entertainment. These young girls' names and images were posted all over multiple social media accounts, and the offender interacted with strangers from all over the world having deviant conversations pretending to be the young girls. Because the State did not have evidence that the offender was benefiting financially, there was no charge of identity theft that could be brought.

These girls had their reputations ruined by this offender's online activity and there was no appropriate charge that the police or court could act on. I urge your support for this legislation that will provide some form of protection against this form of online harassment and identity theft. The rapid advancement of artificial intelligence and other tools available to bad actors make it easier than ever to steal identities, fabricate images, and circulate false or harmful content with devastating consequences for victims.

As in the example I gave, existing laws are often inadequate to respond adequately to these violations or to ensure victims receive swift remedies. Our statutes need to adjust with the times. This legislation represents a critical step forward.

Passing House Bill 566 would allow courts to respond in new ways to these evolving threats to our Marylanders' reputations and safety. MCVRC encourages the House to pass HB 566 to help address the ever-changing nature of online activity used to victimize others.

Thank you for considering the support of HB 566 and your broader commitment to protecting Maryland families from these persistent, ever-evolving harms.

Sincerely,

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