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Baltimore City

Health and Government Operations
Committee

Chair

Health Occupations and
Long-Term Care Subcommittee

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Joint Committee on Administrative,
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Testimony of Delegate Samuel I Rosenberg

Before the Judiciary Committee

In Support of

House Bill 1320

Criminal Procedure - Victim Notification - Request at the Time of Charging

Chair Bartlett and Members of the Committee:

This bill addresses a small but important gap in victim notification. Currently, victims are notified of the ability to receive written notice within 10 days after an indictment or information is filed or unsealed in Circuit Court. Victims can also self-register for electronic Victim Information and Notification Everyday (VINE) automated electronic notification system that provides information on the custody status of offenders and upcoming court hearing dates.

Allowing early self-registration for VINE earlier at the time of charging is an important step for victim safety. House Bill 1320 addresses this gap by requiring that a law enforcement officer or District Court commissioner inform the victim (or representative) that they may request VINE notifications upon first contact with the victim. These VINE notifications include critical information regarding changes to a defendant's custody status and scheduled court hearings. The existing VINE platform has the capacity to provide earlier notification by extracting the victim registration at the time of charging.

Victim notification is a basic component of victim safety as treating victims with dignity, respect, and sensitivity. The most dangerous time for a victim is when an offender is released because an offender may be angry and looking for vengeance or to intimidate the victim. To be notified of a release by a District Court Commissioner or a detention center after arrest, the victim's request for VINE notification needs to be in the system. A delayed victim notification timeline presents vulnerability to victim safety. Victims who receive immediate and timely notifications have a better opportunity to contact family, change routines, secure housing, obtain protective orders when appropriate, develop and execute safety plans, and coordinate with advocates. Receiving timely notice of hearing also allows victims to contribute more meaningfully to the process. The earliest that notification will increase victim safety.

House Bill 1320 also improves victim confidentiality. The bill expands confidentiality for phone numbers needed for VINE phone or text notification. Additionally, HB 1320 provides a mechanism for VINE notification for charges filed by criminal information in the District Court.

This bill strengthens victim notification by requiring it to start as soon as the criminal charge is initiated. This earlier timeline is the difference between a meaningful notice and a notice that is too late to matter. **For these reasons, I respectfully request a favorable report on House Bill 1320.**

March 5th, 2026.