



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 1044

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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 1044. 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 clients who have suffered the loss of a family member.

HB 1044 would prohibit the presentence release of individuals convicted of a crime of violence or criminal neglect when the victim is a child. I write on behalf of the hundreds of families whose loved ones are taken by violence each year in Maryland. Our attorneys hear firsthand the fear and anguish that families experience when the accused is allowed to return to the community before trial, and this is exponentially worse if the defendant remains in the community even after the finding of guilt.

When a loved one is killed, the harm does not end with the crime itself. When the person who killed their loved one is released on bond, the victims' families lose all sense of safety and protection. They live in constant fear of seeing this person at the grocery store, or near their workplace or children's schools. This fear is not abstract—it is real and justified.

Allowing release in these circumstances sends a devastating message to victims' families: that their safety, stability, and peace of mind are secondary to the convenience of the person charged with causing the death of another. The families conclude that the criminal justice system is biased, doesn't recognize the harm that the defendant has caused, and system is not capable or willing to keep them safe. The emotional toll is profound—grief, anxiety, sleeplessness, and a loss of faith in the justice system.

Allowing release after conviction erodes the entire community's faith in the justice system. Learning that a judge would take such action is confusing at best and inciting lawlessness at worst.

Judicial discretion is important, but there are some lines that should never be crossed, and it is the job of the legislature to put such guardrails in place to ensure that justice across the state has some uniform boundaries. This Bill simply requires that when a judge or jury finds a suspect guilty in the death of a child resulting from a crime of violence and/or neglect, the court must act to detain prior to sentencing. Judges take an oath which includes that they will do their job "diligently and faithfully, without partiality or prejudice." This means that judges must follow the mandate in Article 47 of

the Maryland Constitution which requires that victims be treated with dignity, respect and sensitivity in every stage of the criminal justice process. MCVRC believes that this means detaining defendants convicted of killing a child.

MCVRC employs more than twenty attorneys whose collective decades of experience span this state and beyond. In all that time, not one recalls a judge ever releasing a defendant before sentencing after conviction for killing a child—except for a single case out of Washington County. This overwhelming consensus reveals such a ruling as a profound outlier, repugnant to the common sense and dignity of our great State.

Your decisions as lawmakers have the power to ensure that an aberrant ruling like this will never occur again. Such legislation recognizes due process while also acknowledging the vulnerability of those left behind.

On behalf of all those who must endure the criminal justice system while still processing a permanent loss of their loved one and lingering fear, MCVRC respectfully urges you to give a favorable report to HB 1044. Thank you for your consideration of the Bill and your broader commitment to protecting Marylanders.

Sincerely,



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