



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

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January 27, 2026

Re: Favorable to HB 12

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the Judiciary Committee,

On behalf of the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc. (MCVRC), I respectfully submit this letter in support of House Bill 12, relating to the Juvenile Sex Offender Registry. MCVRC provides legal representation, advocacy, and support services to crime victims throughout Maryland, and we write from the perspective of those whose lives have been permanently altered by sexual and violent crime.

House Bill 12 makes measured and necessary updates to Maryland law that center victim safety, prevention, and informed decision-making, while still respecting the rehabilitative goals of the juvenile justice system.

Recent, publicly reported cases in Maryland underscore why these changes are urgently needed. In Joppatowne High School in 2024, a 16-year-old student, Jaylen Prince, murdered a classmate in a school bathroom. Subsequent reporting revealed that the juvenile had been involved in at least 18 prior violent or serious incidents in schools between 2021 and 2024 and engaged in more violent offenses while incarcerated before sentencing. For victims and their families, this case raised deeply troubling questions about information-sharing, supervision, and whether warning signs were fully understood or acted upon by those responsible for student safety.

Similarly, in Harford County in July 2022, 15-year-old Kayla Hamilton was murdered by Walter Martinez, a juvenile who was released to a group home and permitted to enroll in school while he remained the main suspect in this homicide and as the police were awaiting DNA results before his

arrest in January 2023. Public reporting indicates that requests to detain him were denied and the school was unaware of his violent history.

While these cases are not identical to the offenses covered by House Bill 12, they illustrate a shared and critical theme: when those charged with protecting children lack access to essential information, the risk to victims increases. House Bill 12 directly addresses this concern by allowing limited access to the juvenile sex offender registry by local superintendents or their designees, ensuring that schools can make informed decisions about supervision, safety planning, and appropriate safeguards.

The bill also thoughtfully expands the list of qualifying offenses requiring registry inclusion to reflect the serious harm caused by sexual offenses involving minors, sexual exploitation, and nonconsensual production or distribution of child sexual abuse material. For victims, these are life-altering crimes that demand accountability and recognition of their lasting impact.

Importantly, House Bill 12 preserves confidentiality and balance. Registry access remains restricted to law enforcement and designated school officials, records are not made public, and juveniles are removed from the registry when court jurisdiction ends or upon reaching adulthood. These safeguards ensure that the legislation is protective rather than punitive, focused on prevention rather than punishment.

From the victim's perspective, House Bill 12 is about closing gaps before tragedy occurs, restoring trust in protective systems, and ensuring that the safety of children and survivors is not compromised by avoidable information barriers.

For these reasons, MCVRC respectfully urges the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 12. Thank you for your continued commitment to legislation that protects victims while responsibly addressing complex juvenile justice issues.

Respectfully submitted,



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