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February 2, 2021

Senator William C. Smith, Jr.  
Chairperson, Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
11 Bladen Street  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Smith:

I write in support of SB268, Criminal Law—Crime of Violence—Definition. I am the Chief of the Special Victims Division for the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office. I also serve on the Montgomery County Child Advocacy Center's Multidisciplinary Team, a group that reviews cases involving child sexual abuse.

The crime of Sexual Abuse of a Minor, set forth in section 3-602 of the Criminal Law Article, criminalizes sexual molestation or exploitation of a minor by a parent, household member, family member, or any other person who has permanent or temporary care or responsibility for the supervision of a minor. Sexual molestation or exploitation includes rape and other sexual offenses. Currently, the crime of Sexual Abuse of a Minor only constitutes a crime of violence under section 14-101 of the Criminal Law Article if the victim is under the age of thirteen.

All minors who are sexually abused should receive the same protections as other victims of serious crime. Individuals who sexually abuse minors of any age should be subjected to the same enhancements and penalties as other violent offenders, including penalties for repeat offenders and prohibitions from possessing regulated firearms, rifles, or shotguns. Categorizing sexual abuse of a minor as a crime of violence for all minor victims also sends a strong message to our community about the seriousness of this offense and serves as a deterrent to would-be offenders.

Maryland law should delineate Sexual Abuse of a Minor as a crime of violence for all victims, regardless of age. I strongly urge the passage of SB268.

Sincerely,

Debbie Feinstein  
Chief, Special Victims Division  
Senior Assistant State's Attorney