



## Office of the State's Attorney for Prince George's County

Aisha N. Braveboy, State's Attorney

January 26, 2021

Maryland General Assembly  
House Judiciary Committee  
House Office Building  
Room 101  
Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Support for House Bill 277

Dear Chair Clippinger, Vice Chair Atterbeary and Members of the Committee:

I write in support of House Bill 277, First Degree Child Abuse – Continuing Course of Conduct. Across the State of Maryland children come into emergency rooms with multiple injuries that have occurred over a period of time. One case that recently occurred in Prince George's County involved an 18 month old girl who was brought to the emergency room for burns to her hands and difficulties breathing. It was discovered that this little girl was suffering from 12 different rib fractures that occurred on at least three separate occasions, 18 different bite marks that had broken the skin from two different adults, injuries indicating being whipped with a cord, as well as the burns to her hands. All of these injuries occurred within days and weeks of each other. The medical diagnosis was torture. However, under the current law in Maryland this was not enough to charge a First Degree Child Abuse, because although the medical diagnosis was torture, the doctors could not say that any *single* instance of abuse involved a brain injury, starvation, substantial risk of death, disfigurement or impairment of an organ. This left the charge of Second Degree Child Abuse, which is not considered a crime of violence. This case is but one example. We have numerous cases involving multiple fractures, signs and symptoms of continued beatings or whippings, and even repeated water boarding of our young children.

When a child is systematically or continually abused by a caregiver, they deserve the utmost protection and justice under the law. Being told that the continued abuse against them is not a crime of violence and the acts of abuse do not carry significant sentencing guidelines, reinforces the idea that this type of abuse is permitted, or not taken seriously by the criminal justice system does not provide the necessary protection or justice these most vulnerable victims deserve.

The State of Maryland has already recognized the seriousness of a continuing course of action of sexual abuse, and has for decades. We are asking for the same consideration and support for children who suffer physical abuse. I urge a favorable vote on House Bill 277 .

Thank you,

*Kathryn A. Marsh*

Assistant Chief, Special Victims' Unit