



ANTHONY B. COVINGTON

State's Attorney for Charles County

January 17, 2022

Maryland House Judiciary Committee
Luke Clippinger, *Chair*
House Office Building, Room 101
Annapolis, MD 21401 – 1991

Re: Favorable Report for House Bill 223

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Committee:

As a career special victims' prosecutor there have been numerous cases that have come across my desk that involve a minor victim who has been sexually exploited by a person who held a position of authority. In many cases where the minor is twelve or older and there is not a true "care and custody" component which leads to these cases falling through the cracks. The types of cases I have seen, but have been unable to charge, include but are not limited to: coaches, scout leaders, internships, tutor sessions, volunteer organizations and youth groups. In these situations, the adult leaders have exploited their positions of trust and engaged the minor in grooming behaviors that led to sexual relationships. Many of the victims I have met have struggled with guilt and shame for years as they considered the sexual exploitation "consensual" or at least agreed to due to the grooming manipulation.

Maryland is in the minority of states when it comes to protection of minors from adult individuals in positions of authority. Almost 30 states have expanded their definition of position of authority to better protect its' citizens from sexual exploitation. Maryland must do better, and I urge a favorable return of this bill.

Thank you,

K.A. Marsh

Kathryn A. Marsh
Special Victims Liaison, Assistant State's Attorney