

Statement from Maryland Delegate C.T. Wilson in response to HB263, the Hidden Predator Act

“Today I made the difficult decision to pull HB263, the *2021 Hidden Predator Act* from consideration.

For almost a decade, I have sat with survivors of child sexual abuse and listened to their stories, understanding with complete empathy the pain and stress that this type of childhood trauma brings to your life and to the life of your loved ones. Over the years we have learned more about the science behind childhood trauma, the impact on a child’s developing mind and the residual effects that it has on health and well-being into adulthood. We have read and listened to experts talk about the delays in disclosing child sexual abuse, well into adulthood and how that aligns with the science of traumatology.

As a legislator, my job is to listen and take action, and over the years, working in good faith with survivors and advocates we have made progress. My colleagues in the House of Delegates have acted decisively in the last two sessions, sending a clear message that passage of the *Hidden Predator Act* would provide access to justice for adult survivors and bring to light abusers in our midst.

However, this year I have listened as opponents to this legislation make me the center of their personal attacks as they try to rewrite history to disparage my character and veracity. These distractions cannot stand. What is being lost in the arguments and legal discussions is the voice of survivors. They have once again been relegated to the background, even mocked for standing up in support of their desire to seek justice. This legislation has never been about me or my personal story, it has always been about their stories. It has always been about keeping kids safe, about working together to make sure no child experiences this trauma. To my fellow survivors, I am not abandoning you. Know that I see you, I hear you and I continue to stand with you. You will never be alone in this fight.

Thankfully, Senator Shelly Hettleman and her colleagues in the Maryland Senate have taken up the issue this session. The *Hidden Predator Act*, which unanimously passed the House of Delegates in 2020, is now working its way through the process in the Senate. To simplify things, and remove any undue distractions, we will stand united behind one bill - SB134.

I thank the survivors and over 50 faith-based, professional, non-profit, business, research and advocacy groups who have added their organizational support to this legislation. We are all speaking with one voice; survivors voices must be heard, and I am proud to, once again, be standing with them.”

Delegate C.T. Wilson (D-Charles)