

# Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.



Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.  
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## PRESS RELEASE – New laws take effect to help victims of crime

Two laws passed by the General Assembly and signed by the Governor to benefit victims are effective October 1, 2014. Both laws were the priorities of the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center in the 2014 legislative session.

### PROTECTION OF CHILD, DISABLED, AND ELDERLY VICTIMS LAW AND FUNDING

This new law serves to protect the rights of child, disabled, and elderly victims. Under this law, a Judge may appoint a guardian ad litem, if it is determined that there is no one available who is able to adequately assert the victim's rights. Once appointed, the function of the guardian ad litem will be to ensure that victims who are minors, disabled, or elderly are afforded the rights provided to them by law. This new law became effective on Oct. 1, 2014.

The Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention also provided funding to the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center for a new staff attorney to serve as a guardian ad litem for victims who are minors, disabled, or elderly.

### ALEX'S LAW – STATEMENT BY VICTIM OR VICTIM'S REPRESENTATIVE

Alex's Law (named after an actual victim) requires a court in a sentencing or disposition hearing to allow a victim or the victim's representative to address the court before the court imposes a sentence or makes another disposition in a case. For the victims of crimes the opportunity to briefly speak before a court and describe the impact on their lives can help them find resolution and move on with their lives.

Prior to this change, the law provided that courts "may" allow victim impact statements in certain cases. As such, a victim or victim's representative was only authorized to address the court if a request was made by the prosecuting attorney or if the victim had filed a notification request form.

Under the new law, Maryland legislators use the stronger language of "shall," to extend the right to be heard to apply to all victims. As a result, a victim or victim's representative does not have to rely on a request submitted by the prosecuting attorney and may request permission to address the court during the sentencing or other disposition phase regardless of whether they have previously submitted a notification request form.

The Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center, Inc. (MCVRC) advocated for this statutory change. As part of its counseling and legal assistance functions, MCVRC assists victims and victim's representatives secure their right to address the court and assists them in crafting their statements. This law significantly enhances the goals of the MCVRC.

Victims interested in being heard in criminal and juvenile delinquency cases should contact the Center at 1-877-VICTIM-1.

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