



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**House Bill HB0320 Criminal Law – Exploitation of Vulnerable Adult or Elderly Individual –
Undue Influence
Judiciary Committee – February 4, 2020
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Woman's Democratic Club of Montgomery County (WDC)** for the 2020 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with more than 600 politically active women and men, including many elected officials. WDC urges the passage of HB0320. This bill will make important changes to relevant sections of current criminal law to strengthen and expand protections for vulnerable adults, specifically aging and elderly women. Thus, protecting the aging and elderly, and their property, from exploitation by family members or other persons.

According to the National Council on Aging (NCOA), vulnerable adult (elderly) abuse is a national issue that is left to local governments and police to protect their most vulnerable residents. Abuse includes physical abuse, emotional abuse, sexual abuse, financial exploitation, neglect, and abandonment. The State Attorney's Office defines crimes against older adults as a crime against anyone age 65 or older. If the crime involves financial exploitation, the victim must be age 68 or older or be a vulnerable adult (over age 18 and lacking physical or mental capacity to provide for their daily needs).

According to the Maryland Department of Aging (MDA) and the U.S. Census Bureau, the senior population is growing, both in absolute terms and as a percent of the total population of the state. In Montgomery County alone the number of seniors (age 65+) is projected to more than double between 2010 and 2040. In fact, for the first time in history, people aged 65 and older will outnumber children under age 5. Although fraud and abuse crimes and exploitation activities target all older citizens, it particularly impacts aging women. According to the MDA, as the population ages, women increasingly outnumber men. As women age and are living longer, particularly if they live alone or with limited support, there is an increased possibility of financial mistakes, often relating to widowhood, such as estates, insurance proceeds, inheritance, and other property. Therefore, they become easy prey for fraud, abuse, and undue influence by family members or other persons. We must protect our aging seniors!

We ask for your support for HB0320 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Respectfully,

Diana Conway
President