
BILL NO: House Bill 493
TITLE: Criminal Procedure - Criminal Injuries Compensation Fund - Conditions
for Awards on Claims
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: February 12, 2020
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

House Bill 493 would modify permissible reimbursement for a victim from the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board by adding property damage, and will offer a good cause reason to compensate even if the victim did not comply with the difficult 48 hour reporting requirement. The Women's Law Center (WLC) supports House Bill 493 because it may make it more possible for rightful claims to be paid and allows for some consideration to be given in circumstances when the 48 hour notice was not met.

The Criminal Injuries Compensation Board can be a resource for victims of crime who experience certain types of loss or damages. However, we find that most of our intimate partner violence clients are not able to recover anything. This is most often because they have failed to report the crime within the very narrow 48 hour time frame to do so. The failure can be for a variety of legitimate reasons – addressing more pressing issues, such as alternative housing, health care needs due to injury, safety planning, etc. We collect this data from all of our clients, and the 48 hour limitation is the greatest barrier to reimbursement. Further, property damage can be very expensive and our clients tend to have limited income or resources, so cannot afford to have property fixed. This can include significant damage to a home or car, for example. A damaged vehicle can prevent the survivor from keeping her job. A damaged house does not garner the same price if put on the market. A damaged phone prevents the survivor from being able to seek help.

HB 493 is a small expansion of existing law that will help people with legitimate reasons in seeking payment from the CICB.

Therefore, the Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. urges a favorable report on House Bill 493.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change. The Women's Law Center operates two hotlines, the statewide Collateral Legal Assistance for Survivors Project, the Protection Order Advocacy and Representation Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County and Carroll County and the statewide Multi-Ethnic Domestic Violence Project.