

BILL NO: House Bill 296
TITLE: Interim and Temporary Protective Orders - Electronic Filing and Video Conferencing Hearings
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: February 3, 2022
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

House Bill 296

Only 34% of people who are injured by intimate partners receive medical care for their injuries.¹ Yet in a study of femicide 41% of victims had sought health care for physical injury or mental health issues before they were killed by their intimate partner.² In 2020, there were 56 individuals in Maryland that lost their lives due to domestic violence. This is the highest number of domestic violence deaths in five years. Leaving an abusive relationship is also the most dangerous time for a victim of domestic violence. These statistics highlight the critical role that healthcare settings plays in identifying domestic violence and assisting victims before they are injured again or even worse, killed.

Currently, when a patient presents to the hospital for evaluation and treatment from a domestic violence assault (or for something else but reports ongoing domestic violence), they must leave the safety of the hospital and go to the courthouse so they can file for a protective order. Hospitals screen for domestic violence, and they have security staff in the Emergency Departments to protect their patients, yet they cannot provide safety once the patients are discharged. Often patients may be too traumatized from the assault, they may lack the transportation to get them to the courthouse or they may not be physically able to go to the courthouse due to extensive injury or illness. Also, the abuser might be outside in a car waiting for them to leave.

This should not be a difficult program to develop. The technology already exists, and Maryland courts conducted virtual hearings throughout the pandemic. There is no reason for a victim to leave the safety of a hospital and drive to a courthouse to obtain the safety of a protective order, it is a barrier to their safety.

For the above stated reasons, I urge a favorable report with sponsor amendments on HB 296.

Thank you,

Rosalyn Berkowitz, BSN, RN. FNE A/P

Commissioner, Baltimore County Commission for Women

¹ <https://ncadv.org/learn/statistics>

² Phyllis W. Sharps, Jane Koziol-McLain, Jacquelyn Campbell, Judith McFarlane, Carolyn Sachs, Xiao Xu, Health Care Providers' Missed Opportunities for Preventing Femicide, Preventive Medicine, Volume 33, Issue 5, 2001, Pages 373-380, <https://doi.org/10.1006/pmed.2001.0902>.