



HB296 Family Law – Interim & Temporary Protective Orders – Electronic Filing & Video Conferencing Hearings
House Judiciary Committee – February 3, 2022

Testimony of Adam Rosenberg, Executive Director, LifeBridge Health Center for Hope

Position: **SUPPORT**

Center for Hope writes in support of HB296 which would expand and modernize access to critical interim and temporary protective orders for survivors of abuse. Enabling these extremely vulnerable victims of all ages the access to an electronic petition for a protective order within the safe space of the hospital treating them allows them to seek relief from further harm for the very injuries sustained that placed them in medical care. The burden is removed for a hospitalized patient-victim to physically appear at a courthouse or commissioner to file such a temporary petition, thereby enhancing safety.

Center for Hope, a subsidiary of LifeBridge Health, provides trauma-informed crisis intervention, forensic interviews, medical exams, mental health, wraparound case management, family advocacy and workforce development services. Center for Hope now includes Northwest Hospital's DOVE domestic violence response program, one of the state's oldest and largest hospital based domestic violence programs, as well as Baltimore Child Abuse Center, the state's oldest and largest child advocacy center, along with a growing elder abuse advocacy response.

During the last two years of COVID pandemic, our DOVE program at Northwest Hospital experienced a 475% increase in request for shelter care, 222% increase in community referrals, and 25% increase in high risk clients of being killed. These victims have also been accompanied by a 400% increase in the number of children helped. These numbers continue to remain at record levels of 1,500 victims of domestic violence helped each year. While these victims receive treatment at our hospital-based programs, they still must leave the safety of the hospital and advocates caring for them in order to obtain a protective order to keep them, and their children, safe.

Throughout the country, we have all shifted to smart and efficient uses of online video conference environments – from court hearings, legislative sessions, staff meetings, medical exams, therapeutic appointments, and even family gatherings – while video may not have been our first choice, it has rapidly become accepted as a hybrid platform of interaction that will remain and now integrated into our daily lives. The success and effectiveness of online video conferences should be permanently extended to victims of abuse and violence.

Video technology has been widely embraced throughout the nation to permit victims of domestic violence to petition for hearings. This bill logically extends that technology to permit the filing of lifesaving temporary protective orders from a hospital here in Maryland.

We urge a favorable report on HB296.

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