



The Honorable William Smith & Members of the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee  
11 Bladen Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chairperson Smith and Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Frederick County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council (DVCC) writes in support of Senate Bill 398: Criminal Injuries Compensation Board – Victims of Nonfatal Strangulation. The Frederick County DVCC is a multidisciplinary public commission, formed in 2020, to increase collaboration and communication among criminal and civil justice stakeholders, service providers, and community members with the goal of reducing and preventing domestic violence in Frederick County.

The DVCC is in support of Senate Bill 398 because Maryland must support survivors of non-fatal strangulation in getting potentially life-saving health care. In 2020, the General Assembly recognized the lethality of strangulation assaults by categorizing strangulation as a felony-level offense. Police officers, healthcare professionals and victims are increasingly aware of the severity of strangulation--both as a modality of harm, and as a predictor of future homicide. Proper medical care following a strangulation event includes a forensic examination and medical imaging—which many victims cannot afford and therefore are forced to forgo. This is an access barrier that keeps vulnerable victims from receiving life-saving medical care, critical resource-referral, and the proper collection of evidence necessary to support civil and criminal cases essential to survival.

We urge a favorable report on SB 398.

Brett Engler, Esq.  
Frederick County State's Attorney's Office  
Chair, Frederick County DVCC