



March 29, 2024

**Opposition: HB 745 - Family Law - Protective Orders - Crimes of Violence and Stalking**

I am writing to you as the Executive Director of the Greater Washington Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA), which is based in Montgomery County. I have been a proud resident of Montgomery County for the last 20 years.

**We are gravely concerned about HB 745 - Family Law - Protective Orders - Crimes of Violence and Stalking. In short, our field has spent the last 50 years advocating for laws to protect victims of intimate partner violence (IPV) and domestic violence (DV) because of the unique nature of violence occurring within a relationship, often affecting children and other family members. Adding stranger stalking to Protective Orders, when that is already covered in a Peace Order, will create chaos, confusion, misfiling, and most importantly dilute the power of the Protective Order's capacity to protect the most vulnerable victims, namely because stalking can be a precursor to higher lethality in an IPV/DV context, NOT by a stranger.**

The protective order protections included are unique, expansive, and designed to address the high risk of lethality and dangerousness for victims of IPV/DV. This would undermine and dilute the protective order. Research shows that it is domestic violence/intimate partner stalking that creates the greatest risk of physical harm and lethality. *Assessing and Managing the Risks in the Stalking Situation* from the Journal of the American Academy of Psychiatry and the Law, supports this point going so far as to say "At the other extreme, stranger stalkers present the lowest risk of assaulting their victims."

**This bill is wholly unnecessary as adequate protections already exist for these different populations – the stranger stalking victim and the IPV/DV stalking victim. Therefore, we oppose this bill.**

JCADA has two full time attorneys helping survivors successfully file for and receive Protective Orders in Maryland and Virginia. This is already a difficult and traumatic procedure that our team is working to ameliorate for our clients. Adding stranger stalking to the protective order will now grant victims of stranger stalking more protection than some victims of domestic violence, especially those in newer relationships. Because the protections in the protective order are broad it is intentionally limited in terms of eligibility. Further, in the amendment to improve path to permanent protective order there is still a requirement for criminal conviction – most victims of domestic violence do not pursue criminal charges and if they do there is not necessarily a conviction, so this does not meaningfully improve the path to a permanent order of protection for victims of IPV/DV.

*For over 23 years, JCADA has been a trusted, respected, community presence, evolving to provide a full range of legal, clinical, social services and referrals to any survivor of intimate partner violence (IPV) in the Greater Washington area, regardless of gender, religion, immigration status, sexual orientation, or any other identifying factor. Unlike other IPV-focused organizations in the region, all JCADA's services are free of charge, and never arbitrarily time-limited. JCADA empowers all survivors of IPV in the Greater Washington Area to live safely and educates the local Jewish community about intimate partner violence and the general community about the needs of Jewish survivors. We see over 1,000 clients a year and educate over 2,000 teens and adults, with a majority residing in Maryland.*

We appreciate your attention to this matter,

Amanda Katz, Executive Director