

BILL NO: Senate Bill 398
TITLE: Criminal Injuries Compensation Board - Victims of Nonfatal Strangulation
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: February 1, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Among other things, Senate Bill 398 would require that non-fatal strangulation forensic examination expenses be paid for through the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. The Women's Law Center supports SB 398 because strangulation is an indicator of lethality in domestic violence.

Survivors of strangulation are 750% more likely to become a victim of domestic violence homicide. After a strangulation attempt there are numerous medical risks that must be evaluated by a medical provider since most are invisible injuries including damage to the interior neck anatomy, lack of oxygenation, and an increased risk for strokes that can last for months after the assault. SB 398 specifies that "strangulation" includes strangulation that is not related to rape, a sexual offense, or sexual abuse. This is important as not all nonfatal strangulation occurs in only sexual assaults or offenses. It is a common occurrence in non-sexual assault intimate partner violence.

Every survivor of a strangulation should seek medical attention, even when there is no immediate visible evidence of the strangulation. There are many and possible fatal consequences. The ability to pay for that evaluation should not be a barrier to treatment and that is what SB 398 addresses.

For these reasons, the Women's Law Center supports SB 398 and asks for a favorable report.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, legal services 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, working to ensure physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy for women in Maryland.