



Maryland  
Hospital Association

## **Senate Bill 398 - Criminal Injuries Compensation Board - Victims of Nonfatal Strangulation**

**Position: *Support***

February 1, 2024

Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

### **MHA Position**

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) 62 member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of Senate Bill 398.

Across the state, hospital-based sexual assault forensic exam ([SAFE](#)) programs employ forensic nurse examiners. These registered nurses receive special training in evidence collection and are experts in delivering trauma-informed care to survivors of violence and abuse. State law ensures survivors of sexual assault have access to emergency medical treatment for their injuries with no out-of-pocket expense. Hospitals care for survivors of all forms of violence, but there are gaps in the state's reimbursement criteria. There is not a state-funded mechanism to reimburse the cost of providing an exam for survivors of nonfatal strangulation that is not associated with sexual assault or abuse. SB 398 would close this gap, benefiting many survivors of domestic violence and human trafficking.

Strangulation is classified as a "lethality factor" and can serve as a predictor of whether an individual is at greater risk of being killed or seriously injured.<sup>1</sup> In 2021, 58 Marylanders died as a result of intimate partner violence. Of those, 13 were abusive partners, five were bystanders including two children, and 37 were intimate partner victims of domestic violence. New technology can accurately document evidence of strangulation. For example, several Maryland hospitals have access to technology such as an "alternative light source" to detect fingerprints left on a victim's neck.

SB 398 would provide reimbursement and support so hospitals can continue to serve their communities and care for survivors of all forms of violence and abuse. In the case of non-fatal strangulation, supporting access to health care services at no cost to the victim could save lives.

For these reasons, we ask for a *favorable* report on SB 398.

For more information, please contact:

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<sup>1</sup> Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence. "2021-2022 Maryland Domestic Violence Fatality Review State Implementation Team (MD-DVFRSIT). [MD-DVFRSIT 2021-2022 First Annual Report FINAL.pdf \(mnadv.org\)](#)