



**BILL NO:** House Bill 656  
**TITLE:** Family Law - Victims of Domestic Violence Program - Certification and Grant Fund  
**COMMITTEE:** Judiciary  
**HEARING DATE:** February 15, 2024  
**POSITION:** FAVORABLE

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House Bill 656 clarifies in statute that there is a Domestic Violence Grant Fund and enables the Governor to include \$5 million as an annual appropriation to the fund. In addition, HB 656 would require the federally recognized state domestic violence coalition to certify programs as comprehensive domestic violence programs.

In 2022, comprehensive domestic violence programs served over 23,000 victims of domestic violence in the State of Maryland<sup>1</sup>. Pursuant to [Maryland state law](#) and clarified in [COMAR](#), each county and Baltimore City shall be served by at least one comprehensive domestic violence program. There are numerous service providers in Maryland that provide critical services for victims and survivors of domestic violence and their families, however not all programs meet the statutory and regulatory definition of a comprehensive program. It is imperative that there is a local recognized provider to be a point of contact for community allies including courts, law enforcement, and other social services agencies. Currently, there are 19 comprehensive domestic violence programs that provide statutorily required services across the State of Maryland.

<sup>1</sup> <https://goccp.maryland.gov/wp-content/uploads/FL-%C2%A7-4-516a-GOCYPVS-Domestic-Violence-Program-FY-2022-Annual-Report-MSAR-8611.pdf>

To qualify as a comprehensive domestic violence program a service provider must provide a 24-hour hotline, emergency shelter services for a victim of domestic violence and their children, counseling services for a victim of domestic violence, counseling services for an abuser, and additional referrals to other community resources if needed. Only if a program offers each of the enumerated services can they qualify as a comprehensive program.

Currently, comprehensive domestic violence programs are uniquely eligible for specific funding sources including the Maryland Domestic Violence Program (hereinafter “DOMV”). Slightly over \$2 million is allocated annually to this fund which is awarded by the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy. The amount of state dollars allocated to this fund has not changed in at least 10 years. The lack of increase in state funds creates a tremendous burden on victim service providers.

The comprehensive domestic violence programs participate annually in a one-day snapshot to have a year-to-year comparison of victims’ needs. On [September 7, 2022](#), over 1,000 victims of domestic violence received services from one of the domestic violence programs in our state, a 32% increase from the [2021 snapshot](#). Unfortunately, 334 victims had an unmet need for services, a 74% increase of unmet needs from the prior year, demonstrating the increase in the number of victims seeking services and complexity of victims’ needs. Almost 50% of that need was for housing. Emergency shelter is an extraordinary cost, including the cost to maintain the physical space and staff which are available 24 hours a day, 7 days a week. This is a cost that is unique to comprehensive domestic violence programs that are statutorily required to provide emergency housing.

To ensure that resources are directed to the intended service providers and that the necessary and statutorily required services are available in each county and Baltimore City, MNADV, Maryland’s federally recognized state domestic violence coalition, will certify programs as comprehensive domestic violence programs.

As the 19 comprehensive programs in the State of Maryland who are committed to the victims and survivors of domestic violence in Maryland, **we urge a favorable report on HB 656.**

Submitted By:

Allegany County: Family Crisis Resource Center

Anne Arundel County: YWCA of Annapolis and Anne Arundel County

Baltimore City: House of Ruth Maryland

Baltimore County: Family Crisis Center of Baltimore County and TurnAround, Inc.

Calvert County: Calvert Center for Change

Caroline, Dorchester, Kent, Queen Anne's, Talbot Counties: Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence

Carroll County: Springboard Community Services

Cecil County: The Bridge

Charles County: Center for Abused Persons

Frederick County: Heartly House, Inc

Garrett County: The Dove Center  
Harford County: Sexual Assault/Spouse Abuse Resource Center (SARC)  
Howard County: HopeWorks of Howard County  
Montgomery County: Montgomery County Trauma Services  
Prince George's County: Community Crisis Services, Inc.  
St. Mary's County: Southern Maryland Center for Family Advocacy  
Somerset, Wicomico, Worcester County: Life Crisis Center Inc.  
Washington County: CASA, Inc.