



BILL NO: Senate Bill 125
TITLE: Residential Real Property - Local Limits on Summoning Law Enforcement or Emergency Services
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: January 23, 2025
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the COMMITTEE to favorably Report on SB125.**

In 2023, this body passed Senate Bill 215/Senate Bill 450, which prohibited landlords from including restrictions on calling law enforcement or emergency services or penalize a tenant solely for summoning law enforcement or emergency services. Because of a drafting oversight, that 2023 bill only prohibited local governments from *enacting* such ordinances, but didn't address the small number of local governments that have these ordinances already. Senate Bill 125 would close that loophole. Giving landlords the power to silence victims and to prevent them from seeking protection from law enforcement when necessary is very dangerous.

Similarly, nuisance laws negatively impact victims of domestic violence. These laws both deter victims from contacting police if they need protection or their assistance and cause homelessness or housing instability. Victims of domestic violence already experience housing obstacles with 38% of victims of domestic violence experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives.¹ One of the many reasons that a victim may not leave an abusive situation is due to their lack of economic security and inability to obtain safe and affordable housing. In addition, an abuser can use the nuisance laws to threaten a victim into silence by stating that they will be evicted or fined if they call the police.

¹ Charlene K. Baker, Cook, Sarah L., Norris, Fran H., "Domestic Violence and Housing Problems: A Contextual Analysis of Women's Help-seeking, Received Informal Support, and Formal System Response," *Violence Against Women* 9, no. 7 (2003): 754-783.

For further information contact Laure Ruth ■ Public Policy Director ■ 301-852-3930 ■ lruth@mnadv.org



The Fair Housing Act and Violence Against Women Act both extend housing protections to victims of domestic violence. Nuisance laws undermine those protections by subjecting victims to eviction or fines for contacting law enforcement. Concerns have been raised nationally regarding the application and use of these laws on already marginalized communities due to the selective enforcement of the nuisance laws.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence** urges a **favorable report on SB125.**

For further information contact Laure Ruth ■ Public Policy Director ■ 301-852-3930 ■ lruth@mnadv.org

1997 Annapolis Exchange Parkway, Suite 300 ■ Annapolis, MD 21401
Tel: 301-429-3601 ■ E-mail: info@mnadv.org ■ Website: www.mnadv.org