



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND  
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**Senate Bill 0294 – Criminal Procedure – Protection of Identity of Victim  
of Sexual Assault or Stalking**

**Judicial Proceeding Committee – February 5, 2026  
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2026 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of SB 0294. This bill will expand protection of victims/survivors of sexual assault or stalking by automatically redacting their names and identifying information from court documents and shielding their identities in court records, thus making it easier and safer to report these crimes. Many times, victims are not aware that they can ask for their names to be shielded from public view. This bill will make that protection automatic and easy.

Of all adult women residing in Maryland, 19%, or about 457,000 adult women, have experienced some form of completed or attempted rape in their lifetime. About 44%, or 1,058,000 of Maryland's women, and more than 23% of Maryland's men, about 520,800, have experienced other forms of sexual violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Crime Victimization Survey, 1992-2015).

As an example, a few barriers to reporting rape incidents to law enforcement include not wanting others to know about the rape and fear of retaliation from the offender (Tapp, S. N. & Coen, E. J. (2025). "Criminal Victimization, 2024." U.S. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics. Retrieved November 26, 2025, from <https://bjs.ojp.gov/document/cv24.pdf>).

In this age of social media, stalking is done in person as well as online. Fear of identity reveal is a major deterrent to filing charges, as personal information would be available to those who may blame, question, disbelieve or harass survivors. Protecting privacy can help remove this barrier to these crimes being reported.

In 2024, SB 111 was passed which protects the identity of minor victims, including those who have suffered sexual assault. This bill would add adult survivors, making identity protection available and automatic for all Marylanders who have been victims of sexual assault and stalking. The passing of this bill will empower survivors to come forward to report these crimes, thus helping to remove predators from Maryland streets before more harm is done to the survivors and to future victims.

**We ask for your support for SB 0294 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.**

Cynthia Rubenstein  
WDC President

Deborah Williams  
WDC The Basics Committee

Kate Stein  
WDC Advocacy Chair