

BILL NO: House Bill 0216
TITLE: Criminal Law – Benefits Exploitation
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: January 27, 2026
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is dedicated to ensuring the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women throughout the state. We fully support measures aimed at addressing the needs of survivors of intimate partner violence, including protections that safeguard survivors from economic abuse and exploitation.

HB 0216 is intended to protect individuals from the theft of government benefits through deception, exploitation, coercion, and/or isolation. While this crime disproportionately affects senior citizens and vulnerable adults, it also occurs within intimate partner relationships.

In such cases, an abuser may use violence, intimidation, coercion, and/or threats of violence to compel a victim to surrender their government benefits.

For these reasons, the Women's Law Center of Maryland respectfully urges a favorable report on HB 0216.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.