



BILL NUMBER: HB 497

TITLE: Family Law - Temporary and Final Protective Orders - Duration and Relief

COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings

HEARING DATE: 2/12/2026

POSITION: FAV

TurnAround, Inc. is the designated rape crisis center for Baltimore City and Baltimore County and a comprehensive domestic violence service provider, offering crisis response, survivor-centered advocacy, legal referrals, trauma-informed therapy, and community education. TurnAround also serves as the Regional Navigator for Baltimore County and Howard County, providing specialized services to survivors of human trafficking, and is a member of MCASA, MNADV, and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force. The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF) Legislative Subcommittee brings together service providers, law enforcement, and legal advocates to improve Maryland's response to trafficking and related forms of gender-based violence. Collectively, we work with survivors every day who rely on Maryland's protective order system as a core safety mechanism when they are fleeing abuse, including intimate partner violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking-related exploitation.

House Bill 497 strengthens Maryland's protective order framework in two keyways. First, it extends the duration of temporary protective orders from 7 to 14 days after service and allows the corresponding final protective order hearing to be held within 14 days after service of the temporary order. Second, it explicitly authorizes courts to order respondents in final protective orders to pay certain documented losses and expenses incurred as a direct result of the abuse, including medical and mental health treatment, property damage, relocation and shelter costs, transportation, filing fees, court costs, and reasonable attorney's fees, while preserving a petitioner's right to pursue additional losses later.

For survivors of domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking, the period immediately following separation from an abusive person is often the most dangerous time. Extending the effectiveness of temporary protective orders from 7 to 14 days provides a more realistic window for service, for survivors to secure safe housing, and for them to engage with counsel and advocacy services ahead of a final hearing. In practice, service delays, court closures, and the logistical complexity of relocation mean that a 7-day window can be unworkably short for many survivors. HB 497's modest extension ensures that the protections the court has already found necessary

remain in place long enough to be meaningful, while still requiring a prompt final hearing and preserving the respondent's opportunity to be heard.

Survivors frequently incur substantial, immediate costs as a direct result of abuse, including emergency medical or mental health care, changing locks or repairing damaged property, temporary shelter or hotel stays, relocation deposits, and transportation to stay ahead of an abuser or trafficker. For trafficking survivors in particular, abusers often weaponize economic instability, leaving survivors with no savings, damaged credit, and disrupted employment when they attempt to leave. HB 497 appropriately recognizes that meaningful protection must address both physical safety and economic stability by allowing courts, in final protective orders, to order respondents to pay documented losses directly caused by the abuse. This targeted relief helps survivors remain housed, access treatment, and maintain employment, thereby reducing the likelihood that they will be forced to return to an abusive or exploitative situation out of financial desperation.

Maryland has made significant investments in improving its response to sexual violence, domestic violence, and human trafficking, including through the Regional Navigator program and the multidisciplinary work of the MDHTTF. HB 497 is a logical and necessary extension of that work: it strengthens a tool survivors already use—the civil protective order—rather than creating an entirely new process, and it does so in a way that is narrowly tailored to documented needs. By explicitly listing compensable losses and clarifying that a protective-order-based monetary award does not bar later civil claims for additional or longer-term damages, HB 497 provides clarity to both courts and parties. This structure supports early, limited relief without stripping survivors of the ability to pursue more comprehensive remedies through other civil avenues when appropriate.

As a direct service provider, TurnAround routinely supports survivors in seeking protective orders in conjunction with safety planning, emergency shelter, and legal referrals. Survivors often arrive at court in crisis, having already paid out-of-pocket for hotel rooms, emergency transportation, medical care, or emergency childcare in order to escape imminent danger. The ability of the court to address these immediate, abuse-related costs in a final protective order can be the difference between a survivor maintaining safe, stable housing and being forced back into the abuser's home or into homelessness. For trafficking survivors, who may be fleeing an exploiter while navigating complex criminal and immigration systems, the economic relief authorized by HB 497 is particularly critical to sustaining safety over time.

For these reasons, TurnAround, Inc. and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee respectfully urge the Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 497.

For further inquiries, please contact Amanda Rodriguez, Esq., Chief Executive Officer, TurnAround, Inc., and Chair, MDHTTF Legislative Committee, at arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org.