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BILL NO:	House Bill 0497
TITLE:	Family Law – Temporary and Final Protective Orders – Duration and Relief
COMMITTEE:	Judiciary
HEARING DATE:	February 12, 2026
POSITION:	<b>SUPPORT</b>

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The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a nonprofit legal organization dedicated to protecting the physical safety, economic security, and civil rights of women and their families across Maryland. Through our legal services, policy advocacy, and education, we work to remove barriers that endanger survivors of abuse and to advance laws that promote safety, stability, and justice.

Consistent with this mission, the Women's Law Center of Maryland strongly supports HB 497, which advances critical protections for survivors of abuse by addressing both procedural barriers and the economic harm caused by violence. The bill has two primary objectives: extending the timeline between a temporary protective order (TPO) hearing and a final protective order (FPO) hearing, and authorizing courts to order restitution for financial losses suffered by a petitioner as a result of the respondent's abuse.

Maryland is one of only a few states with such a short timeframe between TPO and FPO hearings. By contrast, twenty-three states schedule final protective order hearings 14 to 15 days after the temporary order is issued. Extending this timeline will allow law enforcement additional time to effectuate service on respondents—an ongoing challenge in many counties and in Baltimore City, where service frequently takes longer than the current seven-day window. A longer interval will also give survivors much-needed time to address the many urgent and complex issues that arise when leaving an abusive relationship, including securing housing, obtaining medical care for themselves and their children, adjusting work schedules to attend court hearings, arranging transportation, and seeking legal representation.

The bill's second provision would allow a petitioner to seek restitution for financial losses directly resulting from the respondent's abuse. These losses often include medical expenses and the destruction of personal property, such as cell phones, clothing, vehicles, windows, and doors. Under current law, survivors must pursue a separate civil or criminal action to recover these costs—a process that can take months to reach court and places additional burdens on individuals already facing instability and trauma.

For these reasons, the Women's Law Center of Maryland urges a favorable report on HB 497.

*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.*