



Senator William C. Smith
2 East Miller Senate Office Building
11 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

January 28, 2020

Dear Senator Smith and Members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

The Greater Washington Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA) **strongly supports Senate Bill 210 to ensure that Protective Orders are available to victims of sexual assault.** At JCADA, our mission is to support victims of power-based violence to become empowered and live safely; educate the community about power-based violence and appropriate responses; and prevent future generations from suffering power-based violence. We provide these services without regard to race, national origin, ability, background, faith, gender, gender identity, gender expression, ethnicity, or sexual orientation, and the clients we serve are victims of domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, harassment, elder abuse and dating violence. Last year, JCADA supported over 580 survivors of power-based violence and educated more than 2,800 youth, parents and educators about healthy relationships through our prevention program *AWARE*.

At JCADA, we provide free legal, counseling, and victim advocacy services to victims and survivor. Our legal services are offered free of charge and include representation in protective orders and crime victims' rights. For victims of sexual assault, having to check off that they were in a "sexual relationship" with someone who sexually assaulted them can be an added trauma when they are trying to fill out a protective order petition. A sexual relationship implies consent, whereas this bill would work to clarify that victims of sexual assault are eligible for protective orders. The language that we use in these situations makes a tremendous difference, and implying that an assault is a relationship diminishes the horrible things that sexual assault survivors have endured.

Additionally, JCADA has heard from other partners around the state that many jurisdictions do not classify sexual assault as grounds for a protective order. Unfortunately, services are structured in such a way to ensure that victims of domestic violence and sexual assault receive more supportive services than many recipients of peace orders. By clarifying that victims of sexual assault are eligible for a protective order, this statute also helps ensure that victims get the ongoing safety planning, legal and emotional support they need from agencies like ours and others.



www.jcada.org • jcada@jcada.org

P.O. Box 2266 • Rockville, MD 20847 • Office: 301-315-8040 • Confidential Helpline: 301-315-8041

Thank you for considering this testimony in support of SB 210. If you have any questions, please feel free to contact me at amanda@jcada.org.

Best,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Amanda Katz". The signature is written in a cursive style with a prominent initial 'A'.

Amanda Katz
Executive Director