

SB212



January 24, 2020

The Honorable Susan Lee and Delegate Pippy and Atterbearry  
James Senate Office Building, Room 223  
11 Bladen St., Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Senator Lee,

I am writing to support your bill to amend Maryland law to make strangulation or suffocation during an assault a first-degree felony. At Court Watch Montgomery, we seek to reduce intimate partner violence in Maryland by ensuring victims have access to responsive justice and vital services that can stop the abuse quickly and permanently. We work towards the day when all domestic violence victims coming to court for legal protection are safe, treated with respect, and receive comprehensive legal protections that help stop their abuse. We closely monitor the court system and make our findings public. With the help of our volunteers, we have been successful in bringing about change, but there is much more to be done.

As an organization that monitors courthouses and judicial outcomes for domestic violence cases, we recognize the huge significance of a bill such as this. For reference, 43% of domestic violence homicide victims were strangled by their perpetrator within the last 12 months. Research also reports that less than 50% of strangulation survivors have visible markings on their necks and that cases involving strangulation are 750% more likely to result in death. Despite the known prevalence and severity of strangulation, it is far too commonly mislabeled as "choking" and downplayed.

We must hold offenders accountable. As one of only three states without a felony strangulation law, Court Watch Montgomery strongly believes this is an imperative step for Maryland.

Thank you for the work you are doing to keep domestic violence survivors safe.

Respectfully,

Carolyn Hoffmann, LGSW  
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