

Good afternoon committee members. My name is Connie and I am a survivor of domestic violence. This is the first time I have ever talked about my experience publicly.

I felt the urgent need to testify in favor of HB 233 because strangulation was my ex-husband's most regular form of physical assault. It is important to take into consideration that once you are held tightly by the neck and are weak, it gives the abuser easy leverage with which to throw you head-first into a wall, the floor or furniture. The resulting head trauma is also very dangerous, and frequently physically invisible. The combination of the two would cause me headaches for days.

Making strangulation a felony would greatly increase the cause of justice and prevention because it would presumably lift the statute of limitations from these assaults. Presently, as a misdemeanor, the statute of limitations is only one year. It takes most domestic violence victims, including me, longer than that to get out from under the thumb of their abuser and be ready to take action.

Felony status for strangulation is also essential because, as we know, the systems put into place to protect victims frequently fail to do so. I called the police once right after an assault during which my husband strangled me, threw me to the floor, and kicked me. My husband, who is still an attorney for the State of Maryland, was shown great deference by the three responding police officers. Although I told them I was strangled, they took no action. They failed to follow the department policy of calling an independent Domestic Violence Counselor to talk to the victim in the moment. That phone call might have made all the difference for me.

When I ordered both the written police report and the body camera footage from BCP, they contradicted each other. I filed an internal investigations complaint, and the police were forced to admit that I did indeed tell them on the scene that I had been strangled. But by that time the one-year statute of limitations was over. My abuser was beyond justice.

The passage of HB 233 would be an indication to abusers, the police, legal organizations and the courts that domestic violence is actually a serious and heinous crime. Many still take it lightly. By increasing sentences and lifting the

statute of limitations, you could prevent some of the all too frequent deaths and destruction of women by intimate partners.

Thank you for your time and your support of HB 233.

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