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**RE: HB233/SB212**

Good afternoon Mr. Chair and Honorable Members of the Judiciary and Judicial Proceedings Committees. For the record, I am Ann Beverly Taylor. I am writing this letter in support of HB233/SB212 Criminal Law – Assault in the First Degree – Suffocation or Strangulation. This bill will make the intentional suffocation or strangulation a 1<sup>st</sup> Degree Assault.

To my surprise, Maryland is one three states that has yet to pass legislation that considers strangulation as a first-degree assault. It is only a second degree assault and a misdemeanor. It only carries a maximum penalty of 10 years and up to a \$2500 fine. Strangulation has been identified as one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence and carries significant risk for medical complications if the victim is not choked to death. According to a recent study, as many as 10,000 women in Maryland are strangled every year. (unbelievable!!) Please, please help our prosecutors to charge more strangulation cases as felonies and **save more lives.**

I strongly urge you to be in favor of the legislation, HB233/SB212, Criminal Law – Assault in the First Degree – Suffocation or Strangulation.

Ann Taylor