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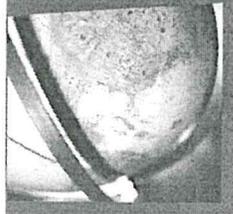
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January 23, 2020

The Honorable Susan Lee and Delegates Pippy and
Atterbeary
James Senate Office Building, Room 223
11 Bladen Street, Annapolis, MD 21401

Re: Letter in Support of Maryland Strangulation Bill

Dear Senators Lee and Cassilly and Delegates Pippy and Atterbeary,

I have been working with domestic violence victims since May 1995, when I started volunteering at African American Family Services in Minneapolis, Minnesota. In addition, I am a community member of Montgomery County, Maryland's Domestic Violence Coordinating Council and a Maryland-licensed attorney whose practice areas include family law.

Prior to attending the strangulation training organized by Montgomery County's State's Attorney's Office, Police Department, Sheriff's Office and Adventist Healthcare Shady Grove Medical Center on December 11, 2019, I knew absolutely nothing about the direct causal connection between non-fatal strangulation (often mistakenly described by victims as "choking") and victims' loss of unconsciousness, stroke, brain damage, miscarriage, involuntary defecation and urination, to cite a few examples. It is fair to assume that many attorneys and judges still do not have the benefit of this information and therefore, might not fully grasp the seriousness of non-fatal strangulation cases without a law that specifically remedies it.

I cannot count the number of victims who reported being "choked" repeatedly by the same abusers. This is why I strongly support the bill to amend Maryland law and make strangulation or suffocation in the course of an assault a first degree assault. Passage of the bill will have the immediate effect of deterring such heinous conduct and the repetition there of. Besides, it will save the lives of victims most of whom tend to be afraid of and/or financially dependent on their abusers and therefore, tend to deny or diminish the severity of their abusers' conduct and the effects thereof. In addition, it will enhance the administration of justice and reduce inconsistent outcomes. Thank you for your time and attention.

Respectfully,

Eshigo P. Okasili