



DEPARTMENT OF POLICE

Marc Elrich
County Executive

Marcus G. Jones
Chief of Police

HB233/SB212

Criminal Law – Assault in the First Degree – Suffocation or Strangulation

January 28, 2020

Testimony

Jordan Satinsky

The Montgomery County Police Department supports HB233/SB212: Criminal Law – Assault in the First Degree – Suffocation or Strangulation. I have been a police officer since 1999 in the State of Maryland. I have been an investigator, supervisor, and an executive in the police department’s Special Victims Investigations Division.

Strangulation is one of the many tools used by domestic violence aggressors. These suspects use strangulation as a power and control technique. This technique often results in little to no obvious signs of injury. A responding patrol officer is less likely to make an on-scene arrest of the suspect when there are no obvious signs of injury. However, outside of the patrol context, law enforcement has learned that while these injuries are not always visible to the naked eye, a further forensic medical examination can result in admissible evidence.

Suffocation and strangulation are among key indicators of domestic violence aggressors. Importantly, statistics have shown us that victims of suffocation and/or strangulation are much more likely to be victims of a later homicide. I have had the opportunity to review domestic violence fatalities, as well as conduct these types of homicide investigations. It was exceedingly rare to find a victim who did not report a suffocation or strangulation in the years prior to their murder.

Delineating strangulation and suffocation within the Assault in the First-Degree criminal statute will help deter some would-be aggressors while holding others much more accountable. This move will send a strong message to the victims in our state. A message that says we, as a State, recognize this as a serious issue and we are working diligently to address it.

Chief J. Thomas Manger Public Safety Headquarters - 100 Edison Park Drive Gaithersburg, Maryland 20878
www.montgomerycountymd.gov - www.mymcpnews.com - ChiefMCPD@montgomerycountymd.gov