



Bill: House Bill 233
Title: Criminal Law – Assault in the First Degree – Suffocation or Strangulation
Committee: Judiciary
Date: January 28, 2020
Position: Support

The Maryland Affiliate of the American College of Nurse Midwives strongly supports *House Bill 233 – Criminal Law – Assault in the First Degree – Suffocation of Strangulation*. This bill would save the lives of individuals who are subjected to domestic violence. Non-fatal strangulation is often a pre-cursor to homicide, yet it is only considered assault in the second degree under Maryland’s current law.

We need House Bill 233 to ensure perpetrators receive a higher penalty. More time in prison would protect survivors of domestic violence, and it would give them more time to establish lives away from their abusers.

Most survivors of domestic violence are women. According to the American College of Obstetricians and Gynecologists 1 in 6 abused women is first abused during pregnancy. More than 320,000 women are abused by their partners during pregnancy each year. This puts the women that we care for as midwives at greater risks for preterm labor, risky behaviors during pregnancy and negative perinatal and postpartum outcomes. One of the leading causes of death among pregnant and postpartum women in Maryland is homicide.

As providers of women’s health services, we see women every day who are in abusive situations. We need more legal tools to protect women at the greatest risk. Some of the women at the gravest risk are those whose partners have inflicted non-fatal strangulation upon them. Please vote favorably on HB 233 to ensure that our legal system can work to protect women.

Thank you for your consideration of our testimony. If we can provide any further information, please contact Robyn Elliott at relliott@policypartners.net or (443) 926-3443.