



DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES

Marc Elrich
County Executive

January 23, 2020

Raymond L. Crowel, Psy.D.
Director

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

Dear Senator Lee and Delegates Pippy and Atterbeary:

I am writing in strong support of your bill to amend Maryland law to make attempted strangulation and suffocation First degree assault. I am the Manager for Trauma Services: Abused Persons Program and Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program, in the Montgomery County Department of Health and Human Services. I have been managing these two trauma programs and have seen firsthand the negative psychological and physical sequelae that domestic violence and sexual assault victims suffer after an attempted strangulation.

Apart from the research that points out that these women are 750% more likely to be murdered subsequently to the strangulation attempt, they also suffer from physical injuries, damage to their interior neck anatomy, lack of oxygenation and an increase risk for strokes that can last many months and even into years after the crime.

Montgomery County Trauma Services responds to the hospital together with our partners, the SAFE nurses as well as the Police department to provide coordinated assistance to rape/sexual assault and physically assaulted domestic violence clients presenting at the Emergency Room. Since the beginning of the fiscal year, July 2019, we have collected a five-month sample of such crime victims, overwhelmingly, women who have reported attempted strangulation. We have been able to document 15 attempted strangulation victims of crime from July 2019 through November 2019, a mere 5 months of data collection! Last year in 2018 from July 2018 through November 2018, another 5 months sample, we were able to provide services at the hospital to 10 attempted strangulation victims. These victims suffer not only from psychological trauma but also have to cope with the physical negative after-effects for years to come!

Thank you for introducing such important legislation and holding perpetrators accountable for these horrific crimes. Amending Maryland law to include attempted strangulation and suffocation as first degree assaults will assist in keeping women safe in the State of Maryland.

Sincerely Yours,

Nadja S.P. Cabello, L.C.S.W.-C.

Manager Trauma Services: Abused Persons Program and Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program

Behavioral Health and Crisis Services • Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program

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