



Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women

Bill No: House Bill 233
Title: Criminal Law - Assault in the First Degree - Suffocation or Strangulation
Committee: Judiciary
Hearing Date: January 28, 2020
Position: SUPPORT

The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is a statewide coalition of women's groups and individuals formed to provide a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families. MLAW's purpose is to advocate for legislation affecting women and families. To accomplish this goal, MLAW creates an annual legislative agenda with issues voted on by MLAW members and endorsed by organizations and individuals from all over Maryland. **House Bill 233 a priority on the 2020 MLAW Agenda.**

MLAW supports House Bill 233 because this bill would decrease the risk of femicide by designating intentional suffocation and strangulation as Assault in the First Degree.

Non-fatal strangulation is one of the most significant risk factors for femicide. Studies have shown that prior non-fatal strangulation is associated with a six-fold increase in the chances of attempted homicide and a seven-fold increase in the chances of completed homicide.

Under current law, suffocation and strangulation is classified as Assault in the Second Degree (*Criminal Law §3-203*), which puts such offenses in the same legal category as a slap. This bill would reclassify suffocation and strangulation as Assault in the First Degree (*Criminal Law §3-202*.) The measure creates nuance in the Code and recognizes that suffocation and strangulation, which are heinous in their own right and a red-flag of future and more extreme violence against women, are to be treated as a serious form of assault.

The bill redesignates intentional suffocation and strangulation from Assault in the Second Degree (*Criminal Law §3-203*) to Assault in the First Degree (*Criminal Law §3-202*).

The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women strongly urges the passage of House Bill 233.

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MLAW Supporting Organizations

The following organizations have signed on in support of 2020 Legislative Agenda:

AAUW Maryland
Anne Arundel County Commission for Women
Anne Arundel County NOW
Baltimore County Women's Commission
Calvert County Commission for Women
Charles County Commission of Veterans Affairs
DC Coalition for Safe and Just Communities
Federation of Jewish Women's Organization of Maryland
Greater Washington Jewish Coalition Against Domestic Abuse (JCADA)
HopeWorks of Howard County
Law Office of Carole D. Brown, LLC
Lincoln Park Historical Foundation
Maryland Business and Professional Women
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
Maryland NOW
Maryland Women's Heritage Center
MoCoWoMen
Montgomery County BPW
Montgomery County NOW
Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club
Montgomery County Young Democrats
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc., Anne Arundel Chapter
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Prince George's County, Md
North Arundel Alumnae Chapter, Delta Sigma Theta Sorority, Inc.
On Our Own of Montgomery County Inc.
Planned Parenthood of Maryland
Prince George's County Drug Policy Coalition, Inc.
The Human Trafficking Prevention Project
The Law Office of Jessica O'Kane
The QED Foundation
Women's Equality Day 2020 Celebration Coalition
Women's Law Center of Maryland