



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 Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the designated coalition for the state of Maryland. We represent the work and collective voice of the 18 comprehensive Domestic Violence Service Providers throughout the state. MNADV works to end domestic violence at individual, community, statewide, and systemic levels with legislation being one of our primary concerns.

House Bill 233 a priority on the 2020 MNADV Agenda. MNADV 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 re-designates 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 Network Against Domestic Violence strongly urges the passage of House Bill 233.