



BALTIMORE COUNTY COMMISSION FOR WOMEN

Baltimore County Commission for Women
Historic Courthouse
400 Washington Avenue
Towson, Maryland 21204

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

January 22, 2020

Dear Senator Lee and Delegates Pippy and Atterbeary,

We are writing in strong support of your bill to amend Maryland law to make strangulation and suffocation during an assault a first-degree felony. Based on research, women who have been strangled one time by their partner, are 750% more likely to be killed by that same partner. Hospitals who perform exams on victims of non-fatal strangulation in Baltimore County see approximately 250 patients a year. This number does not include the victims who don't report the incident and the victims who decline to have a medical evaluation.

Research shows that 98% of the victims of strangulation are women. Visible injuries are seen in less than 50% of strangulation victims; however, women can have permanent brain damage and other long-term health consequences that begin to develop seconds after the assault. Yet, perpetrators are not being held accountable for their behavior. Women who have not been evaluated by medical professionals aware of the potential consequences associated with strangulation are at increased risk of death from a stroke or serious complications from a carotid dissection (tear) three months to a year after the assault. All of this is well documented by research.

To date, felony strangulation laws have been passed in 47 states, with the exception of Maryland, Ohio and South Carolina. Thank you for introducing this important legislation. Passing this bill could save the lives of many abused women in our state.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ruth Howard". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "R".

Ruth Howard

President, Baltimore County Commission for Women