



**COMMISSION FOR WOMEN
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT CLUSTER**

January 30, 2020

The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair
House Judiciary Committee
Room 101, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

RE: Letter in Support of HB 248 Protective Orders – Relief Eligibility – Rape and Sexual Offenses

Dear Chairman Clippinger and Members of the Committee:

The Montgomery County Commission for Women (“Commission”) strongly supports House Bill 248 and urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on this bill. The bill is a simple one that would allow victims of rape to be eligible for protective orders instead of a peace order.

For many years, domestic violence and sexual assault advocates have worked to have the protective order cover victims who were in dating relationships and victims of sexual assault. One of their first attempts to add this resulted in the creation of the peace order. While the protective order covered these acts, many victims were not eligible for a protective order because of their relationship to the abuser. In 2015, the law changed to include victims of sexual relationships. Since then, there have been numerous judges who believe that date rape victims do not qualify for a protective order because the parties were not in a “relationship.” By clarifying that this group of victims is eligible for a protective order, it provides them with the special protections of a protective order that are not included in peace orders, *e.g.*, longer time period for the order, removal of firearms, and more robust response by law enforcement.

The Commissioners are charged by law to advise our County Executive, County Council, the public, and county, state and federal government agencies on issues of concern to women. One of our strategic priorities is to advocate for laws that protect women from violence in their intimate relationships. This bill furthers our goal and we urge this Committee’s support of this bill.

Sincerely,

Nicole Y. Drew, Esq.
President
Montgomery County Commission for Women

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