

BILL NO: House Bill 1156
TITLE: Commission on Men and Fatherhood (Fatherhood Protection Act)
COMMITTEE: Health and Government Operations
HEARING DATE: March 17, 2021
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

March 1st marked the beginning of Women’s History Month, and March 8th was recognized around the world as International Women’s Day (IWD). Observed since the early 1900’s, IWD is a global celebration of the social, economic, cultural, and political achievements of women – as well as being a call to action for increased gender parity. This would include parity in education, economics, and leadership opportunities. But the sad reality is that gender parity will not be achieved in our lifetimes, nor in the lives of our children. In fact, according to the World Economic Forum, given the current slowed rates of progress, it will take more than 250 years to fully close the global gender gap¹.

Women in Maryland deserve a future free from stigma, stereotypes and violence; a future that’s sustainable, peaceful, and with equal rights and opportunities for all. They are entitled to laws and policies that work to catalyze closing the *true* gender gap. The Maryland General Assembly has made great strides to promote gender equity in the recent past, including passing sweeping anti-harassment legislation, promoting equal pay for equal work, and prioritizing the health and safety of working families. The undersigned organizations are proud to have supported those initiatives and to continue working with the legislature to ensure women are provided equitable access to success. We firmly believe that when women are given the resources to succeed, we all benefit.

It is an unfortunate irony that House Bill 1156 is heard during a month that should otherwise be spent galvanizing the movement towards gender equity, as the bill is nothing short of a mockery of the progress that has been made throughout the years. Where there is true inequity, we will work to address it. In the meantime, we strongly oppose HB 1156 and urge an unfavorable report.

The Women’s Law Center of Maryland, Inc.
The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault
The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence
NARAL Pro-Choice Maryland
The ACLU of Maryland
Maryland NOW
WISE – Women’s Issue Huddle

¹ World Economic Forum, Global Gender Gap Report 2020, http://www3.weforum.org/docs/WEF_GGGR_2020.pdf