



BILL NO: House Bill 671
TITLE: Public Information Act – Personnel and Investigatory Records – Complaints
Against Police Officers
COMMITTEE: Judiciary Committee
HEARING DATE: February 9, 2021
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 671.**

Survivors of domestic violence frequently do not report the violence they suffer to the police. It is one of the most underreported crimes. A 2015 study conducted by the National Domestic Violence Hotline found that 80% of the survivors of domestic violence surveyed who had never called the police before indicated that they were “somewhat or extremely afraid to call them in the future.”¹ Of the survivors surveyed that had called the police because of the domestic violence, 1 out of 4 said that they would not call again.² In order to begin to end the trauma and violence suffered by survivors of domestic violence, they must feel trust and confidence in the police when calling for help, and unfortunately that trust and confidence does not currently exist.

Sexual misconduct is a frequently reported form of police misconduct and police sexual misconduct has a disproportionate impact on vulnerable populations including survivors of domestic violence.³ Police officers tend to target people with limited power who would be less likely to be believed if they tried to make a report.⁴ HB 671 requires transparency and reporting regarding complaints against police officers, including when a police officer is administratively charged with committing a sexual assault. Greater transparency can help build trust between the police and victims of domestic violence, in particular the victims that are part of already marginalized communities.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 671.**

¹ National Domestic Violence Hotline, Who Will Help Me? Domestic Violence Survivors Speak Out About Law Enforcement Responses. Washington, DC (2015). <http://www.thehotline.org/resources/law-enforcement-responses>

² *Id.*

³ Ritchie, Andrea J., “How Some Cops Use the Badge to Commit Sex Crimes”, *Washington Post*, Jan. 12, 2018. https://www.washingtonpost.com/outlook/how-some-cops-use-the-badge-to-commit-sex-crimes/2018/01/11/5606fb26-eff3-11e7-b390-a36dc3fa2842_story.html

⁴ *Id.*

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