



Marjorie Cook Foundation
Domestic Violence Legal Clinic
2201 Argonne Drive • Baltimore, Maryland 21218 • 410-554-8463 • dlennig@hruthmd.org

TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 744
February 11, 2021
DOROTHY J. LENNIG, LEGAL CLINIC DIRECTOR

The House of Ruth Maryland is a non-profit organization providing shelter, counseling, and legal services to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. House Bill 744 would prohibit the clerk of a circuit court from collecting fees for docketing the appearance of a petitioner's counsel in protective order cases. **We urge the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 744.**

The Violence Against Women Act (VAWA) prohibits jurisdictions that receive certain types of funding from charging a victim costs associated with civil and criminal domestic violence, dating violence, sexual assault and stalking cases.¹ This prohibition extends to fees for docketing the appearance of petitioner's counsel in a protective order case. The State of Maryland receives a significant amount of funding from these various VAWA funding sources. If the State wants to continue to receive this funding, it must prohibit the collection of petitioner's counsel fees in protective order cases.

The House of Ruth urges a favorable report on House Bill 744.

¹ The relevant funding sources are: the STOP (Services * Training * Officers* Prosecutors) Violence Against Women Formula Grant Program and the Improving Criminal Justice Responses to Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, Dating Violence and Stalking Grant (ICJR) Program. See 42 U.S.C. § 3796gg-5; 42 U.S.C. § 3796hh(c)(1)(D).