



BILL NO: House Bill 120
TITLE: Public Information Act - Personnel Records - Investigations of Law
Enforcement Officers (Anton's Law)
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
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 120.**

Domestic violence remains one of the most underreported crimes with almost 600,000 unreported incidents of nonfatal domestic violence victimizations occurring each year between 2006-2015.¹ It is estimated that women in approximately 40% of police officer families experience Officer Involved Domestic Violence (OIDV).² In OIDV cases, a victim might not seek the help of the police because their abuser is a police officer.³

In a 2015 survey, 88% of victims of domestic violence or sexual assault reported that police “sometimes” or “often” do not believe victims or blamed victims for the violence.⁴ In that same survey, 83% of the those surveyed thought police “sometimes” or “often” do not take allegations of sexual assault and domestic violence seriously.⁵ Over 80% believed that police-community relations with marginalized communities influenced survivors’ willingness to call the police.⁶

HB 120 creates critical transparency for survivors of domestic violence, whether that violence was reported to the police or committed by a police officer. If an officer is investigated for either being the abuser in OIDV or the handling or mishandling of a domestic violence event, the

¹ Brian A. Reaves, Ph.D., *Bureau of Justice Statistics, Police Response To Domestic Violence, 2006-2015*, 2017, https://www.bjs.gov/index.cfm?ty=pbdetail&iid=5907&utm_source=juststats&utm_medium=email&utm_content=prdv0615_report_detail_page&utm_campaign=prdv0615&ed2f26df2d9c416fbddddd2330a778c6=lohfkfgfkz-lktztdoo

² Rafaqat Cheema, *Black and Blue Bloods: Protecting Police Officer Families from Domestic Violence*, 54 Fam. Ct. Rev. 487, 489 (2016).

³ *Id.*

⁴ ACLU, [*Responses from the Field: Sexual Assault, Domestic Violence, and Policing*](#), 2015.

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*

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survivor should be able to see the full extent of the investigation to ensure that it was conducted comprehensively and fairly. 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 120**.