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Testimony in **Support** of

SB 429 – Criminal Law – Stalking - Penalties

Dear Chairman Smith and members of the Committee, I am writing to show my strong support for Senate Bill 0429 on behalf of State's Attorney Aisha Braveboy and the MSAA, and to urge a favorable report. This bill enhances the penalty for persons convicted of stalking who are repeat offenders or who had a valid order of protection against them.

As the Chief of the Special Victims & Family Violence Unit in the State's Attorney's Office for Prince George's County, I am unfortunately familiar with cases where a victim has faced stalking from a current or former intimate partner. Stalking is an insidious crime that places the victim in a state of ongoing fear. Stalking victims must constantly be looking over their shoulders and face constant violations of privacy as well as threats of physical violence.

According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, there is a strong correlation between women who have been stalked and who then either survived a murder attempt at the hands of an intimate partner who were ultimately murdered by an intimate partner. These victims often reached out to the judicial system for help first, either by filing for orders of protection, pursuing criminal charges, or both. It is time that the laws of the State of Maryland reflect the danger that these victims are in and provide help to these victims who are so desperately trying to help themselves.

Maryland is the only state without a sentencing enhancement for offenders who have prior stalking convictions or who had an active order of protection against them. It is time for us to step up and make the changes necessary to protect our victims.

For the foregoing reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on SB429.