



BILL NO: House Bill 639
TITLE: Family Law - Grounds for Divorce
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: March 24, 2022
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 Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 639.**

House Bill 639 revises and simplifies the existing grounds for divorce to enable parties to obtain a divorce on the grounds that they have lived separate and apart for 6 months, have irreconcilable differences, or on the grounds of permanent legal incapacity. MNADV supports HB 639 because parties who wish to be able to divorce should be able to do expeditiously. For cases involving domestic violence this will enable a victim to divorce more easily and enables them to begin the process of establishing a new life apart from their abuser and hopefully achieve safety.

House Bill 639 also allows parties to reside together while going through the divorce process. Living separate and apart is not feasible for many parties, especially lower income parties. Many victims of domestic violence lack the financial resources to live separately. This change in law will allow those that seek to divorce a pathway to do so and not be prevented by a lack of financial resources.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 639.**