



**BILL NO:** House Bill 323  
**TITLE:** Real Property - Limitations on Summoning Law Enforcement or  
Emergency Services – Prohibition  
**COMMITTEE:** Judiciary  
**HEARING DATE:** February 9, 2022  
**POSITION:** **SUPPORT**

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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 323.**

House Bill 323 prohibits a landlord from using a lease or form of lease that contains provisions that limits a tenant's ability to summons police. It further prevents a landlord from penalizing or taking retaliatory action against a tenant or another individual solely for summoning the assistance of law enforcement or emergency services. HB 323 also prohibits a local jurisdiction from enacting laws or ordinances known as nuisance laws, that establishes a threshold of requests to summons law enforcement or emergency services or penalizes for summoning law enforcement or emergency services.

Nuisance laws negatively impact victims of domestic violence. These laws both deter victims from contacting police if they need protection or their assistance and cause homelessness or housing instability. Victims of domestic violence already experience housing obstacles with 38% of victims of domestic violence experiencing homelessness at some point in their lives.<sup>1</sup> One of the many reasons that a victim may not leave an abusive situation is due to their lack of economic security and inability to obtain safe and affordable housing. In addition, an abuser can use the nuisance laws to threaten a victim into silence by stating that they will be evicted or fined if they call the police.

The Fair Housing Act and Violence Against Women Act both extend housing protections to victims of domestic violence. Nuisance laws undermine those protections by subjecting victims to

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<sup>1</sup> Charlene K. Baker, Cook, Sarah L., Norris, Fran H., "Domestic Violence and Housing Problems: A Contextual Analysis of Women's Help-seeking, Received Informal Support, and Formal System Response," Violence Against Women 9, no. 7 (2003): 754-783.



eviction or fines for contacting law enforcement. Concerns have been raised nationally regarding the application and use of these laws on already marginalized communities due to the selective enforcement of the nuisance laws.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence** urges a **favorable report on HB 323**.

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