



BILL NO: House Bill 148
TITLE: Criminal Law - Stalking – Definition
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: January 27, 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 House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 148.**

HB 148 makes critical updates to Maryland’s stalking laws to expand the definition of stalking to include the use of electronic communications and devices that can be used to identify a person’s location. According to the CDC, 7.5 million people are stalked each year with women ages 18-24 experiencing the highest rate of stalking.¹ Current or former intimate partners are responsible for stalking 61% of female victims and 44% of male victims and 90% of stalking incidents are committed by someone that the victim knows.² In a recent report studying the impact of technology abuse in the context of domestic violence during the pandemic researchers found an increase in every type of tech abuse including harassment and monitoring or surveillance.³ Stalking is often a precursor to femicide. Studies show that 76% of women murdered by an intimate partner were stalked.⁴

Cell phones, GPS tracking, Apple AirTags, spyware, and other forms of technology are all methods that stalkers use. Yet Maryland’s stalking law does not include any of this technology as a form of stalking. It is important that our laws be updated to reflect these terrifying forms of technological stalking that are the forms of stalking reported most frequently by victims of domestic violence in Maryland. Victims seeking safety can be thwarted by a stalker who uses GPS tracking or one of the many ways of tracking on cell phones. Spyware on a computer can let a stalker know his victim’s plans and internet searches.

¹ https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/pdf/nisvs_report2010-a.pdf

² *Id.*

³ https://static1.squarespace.com/static/51dc541ce4b03ebab8c5c88c/t/61674c082419497a370af990/1634159630368/2021_T2E+Needs+Assessment+Report.pdf

⁴ https://assets.speakcdn.com/assets/2497/domestic_violence_and_stalking_ncadv.pdf



Victims of stalking experience higher rates of depression, anxiety, and insomnia. It impacts employment and can force a victim to move to a new location. Victims of stalking contemplate suicide at the rate of 1 in 4.⁵ Stalking is also an indicator of other forms of violence with 81% of women who were stalked by a current or former husband or cohabitating partner also reporting they were physically assaulted by that partner.⁶

HB 148 aligns Maryland law with the more common forms of stalking experienced by victims in this state. The other existing requirements of the law must still be met. For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 148.**

⁵ *Id.*

⁶ *Id.*