BILL NO: House Bill 210
TITLE: Criminal Trials - Spousal Privilege – Exception
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: February 2, 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 210.**

Not all intimate partner violence is physical. Intimate partner violence can manifest in a variety of ways including physical abuse, sexual abuse, emotional or verbal abuse, coercion, and economic abuse. According to the 2019 National Domestic Violence Hotline Maryland State Report, 97% of the victims that called reported experiencing emotional or verbal abuse.[1] HB 210 seeks to prohibit the spousal privilege from being invoked when a marriage takes place after the date on which the alleged crime that the person is on trial for occurred. This is significant because it could potentially interrupt a pattern of threats and coercion suffered by a victim of intimate partner violence with the hopes of silencing them and preventing them from testifying regarding a crime they have knowledge of. Allowing for the invocation of the spousal immunity after a crime but prior to the trial could perpetuate the abusive coercion and control.

House Bill 210 will prevent a victim of intimate partner violence from being coerced and compelled to marry by their abuser for the purpose of silencing them as a witness to a crime.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 210.**

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[1] *Statistics*, The National Domestic Violence Hotline, Retrieved January 11, 2021 from https://www.thehotline.org/stakeholders/impact-and-state-reports/