



BILL NO: House Bill 186
TITLE: Victim Services Programs - Supplementing Federal Funding and Support (Victim Services Stabilization Act)
COMMITTEE: Appropriations
HEARING DATE: January 31, 2023
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 Appropriations Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 186.**

MNADV represents the nineteen comprehensive domestic violence programs in Maryland. These programs provide emergency shelter, 24-hour hotlines, counseling, advocacy and legal services to victims and survivors of domestic violence. In just one day in Maryland, September 9, 2021, there were 762 victims served by the comprehensive domestic violence programs.¹ Yet, there were 191 victims who had unmet requests for services due to a lack of resources. Almost one-third of the unmet requests were for housing and emergency shelter. In addition, there were 302 hotline contacts in just one day.

The 2021 domestic violence homicide numbers were the highest they have been in over ten years.² There were 58 Marylanders that lost their lives as the result of domestic violence in 2021. At least 47 children were left behind as a result of these deaths.

Victim services providers, including those providing lifesaving services to victims of domestic violence, are heavily reliant on federal grant dollars to operate. The Victims of Crime Act grant (VOCA) is the largest federal source of funds for domestic violence service providers in Maryland. However, the amount of funds available to all states is dramatically lower than it was five years ago. In July 2021 the VOCA Fix was signed into law which will help restore and replenish the Crime Victims Fund.³ Those federal dollars will eventually reach victims and survivors of domestic

¹ <https://nnev.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/03/16th-Annual-Domestic-Violence-Counts-Maryland-Summary-FINAL.pdf>

² https://www.mnadv.org/wp-content/uploads/2022/02/2022-Memorial-Program-Trifold_Final-Version.pdf

³ <https://nnev.org/content/victims-of-crime-act/>

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violence in Maryland, but it will take several years. Based on the federal FY23 funding bill and what is available for distribution in the Crime Victims Fund, Maryland will likely receive an even smaller funding allocation from VOCA which benefits all victims of crime. This federal allocation is still at least \$30 million lower if not more than federal grant allocations from just a few years ago.

For MNADV, VOCA comprises 25% of our overall funding and staff layoffs would occur without sufficient VOCA dollars. One comprehensive domestic violence program uses VOCA dollars to fund their Crisis Response Program. This program includes a 24/7 crisis helpline and text line that responds to a survivor's immediate safety needs and connects them to their full range of trauma response services. It also includes emergency shelter services. Another domestic violence provider that serves victims statewide relies on VOCA to fund legal services. Yet a third victim service provider is dependent on VOCA for over 50% of their budget and is in a constant state of negotiating possible layoffs due to the funding uncertainty.

House Bill 186 provides the crucial funding stability that victim service providers need. Ensuring that there will be a minimum level of funding available will enable domestic violence service providers to address the increase in the number of victims, the increase in the level of violence, the increase in the complexity of cases, the increase in the cost of operating programs, and increase for salaries for staff that continuously work tirelessly to serve victims and survivors of domestic violence.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 186.**