

Comptroller Lierman, thank you for bringing this important piece of legislation forward. Mr. Chairman, Mr. Vice-chairman and members of the committee.

My name is Tania Araya and I am the Director of Programs at TurnAround – a designated rape crisis center, and a comprehensive intimate partner violence and human trafficking service provider. We were founded in 1978 and serve Baltimore City, County and Howard County.

Last fiscal year, our staff fielded more than 13,000 calls and provided critically needed services to 4,000 individuals. The demand for our services increased by more than 300% during the pandemic and has yet to return to pre-pandemic figures.

During the pandemic, we also faced serious financial challenges as agencies around us were closing because of the economic downturn. We were determined however, to keep our doors open with no layoffs. We relied on our funders to help us get through this very tough period as we were existing from invoice to invoice.

Non-profits like TurnAround are mainly funded through reimbursable grants -- which means every month we expend hundreds of thousands of dollars in payroll and emergency shelter placements and direct assistance for survivors fleeing violence and starting their lives over. We sometimes wait more than 60 days to get reimbursed by the state. We are required to have reserves at all times, but are unable to maintain large reserves. And banks rarely offer significant lines of credit to non-profits. Last December, we were owed nearly half a million by state and local funders in delayed payments. At the same time, many non-profits were drafting furlough policies as we heard the news about billions of dollars in surplus. Non-profits contend with serious outcomes with just one late payment as services may be delayed or even denied to our most vulnerable community members.

Utilizing enhanced technology to ensure the sustainability of our state service providers is necessary for the safety of those who are impacted by abuse in Maryland. I request a favorable decision for this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.