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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 824
February 22, 2023
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House of Ruth Maryland is a non-profit organization providing shelter, counseling, and legal services to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. House of Ruth has offices in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Prince George's County, and Montgomery County. House Bill 824 alters the disqualifiers for possession of a regulated firearm and includes a person who is convicted of violating a protective order and placed on supervised probation. **We urge the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 824.**

HB 824 would disqualify a person who has been convicted of violating a protective order and placed on supervised probation from possessing a regulated firearm. In order to be disqualified under this statute, a person would have to commit two acts. First, they would have to have committed an act of abuse against an intimate partner or family member and had a final protective order entered against them. Second, the person would have had to violate a portion of the protective order that has criminal penalties, which includes stay away, have no contact, and do not abuse, and been arrested and convicted of the violation. In addition, the person would have to be placed on supervised probation as part of their sentence. Respondents who violate protective orders are particularly dangerous because of their disregard of a court order requiring them not to have contact with their victim.

Once the protective order expires, usually after one year, protective order respondents can retrieve their firearms unless they are disqualified for another reason. If passed, HB 824 would disqualify respondents who violate the protective order from possessing a firearm. Much research shows that domestic violence victims are at significantly increased risk of serious injury or death when their abusers have access to guns. HB 824 would disqualify a person from possessing a firearm if they violate a protective order and are placed on supervised probation. HB 824 would create an added layer of protection for victims of domestic violence

The House of Ruth urges a favorable report on House Bill 824.