



BILL NO: Senate Bill 862
TITLE: Public Health - Pregnancy - Coercion (Protecting Pregnant Women Against Coercive Abuse and Human Trafficking)
COMMITTEE: Finance
HEARING DATE: March 13, 2024
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

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 Senate Finance Committee to issue an unfavorable report on SB 862.**

Survivors of domestic violence frequently experience forms of abuse that put them at an increased risk for unintended pregnancy, such as birth control sabotage, sexual assault, and reproductive coercion.¹ 2.1 million women in the U.S. have become pregnant as a result of rape by an intimate partner,² and, in one study, 16% of survivors with rape-related pregnancies chose to get an abortion.³ Access to abortions can be a matter of life or death for survivors of domestic violence because experiencing abuse while pregnant puts survivors at a much higher risk of being killed by their abuser.⁴ One of the most common reasons why survivors struggle to leave their abuser is because they have children in common. When a survivor is denied an abortion, they remain tethered to their abusive partner, whereas survivors who choose to terminate an unwanted pregnancy have a reduced risk of experiencing violence over time.⁵

Senate Bill 862, ironically couched in terms of freedom of choice for women, is simply an anti-abortion bill dressed up in the guise of seeking to assist vulnerable women. A much better policy would be to strengthen our criminal laws on assault and sexual violence and increase prosecution under existing laws. In addition, funding more services for victims would offer the greatest chance for victims to live free of their abusers.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges an unfavorable report on SB 862.**

¹ <https://www.futureswithoutviolence.org/userfiles/file/HealthCare/Reproductive%20Health%20Guidelines.pdf>

² <https://www.guttmacher.org/gpr/2016/07/understanding-intimate-partner-violence-sexual-and-reproductive-health-and-rights-issue>

³ <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/grants/211678.pdf>

⁴ https://apps.who.int/iris/bitstream/handle/10665/70764/WHO_RHR_11.35_eng.pdf?sequence=1

⁵ <https://www.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/pmc/articles/PMC4182793/>

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