

SENATOR SARAH ELFRETH
Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County



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Budget and Taxation Committee

Subcommittees

Capital Budget

Pensions

Chair, Public Safety,
Transportation, and Environment

THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
ANNAPOLIS, MARYLAND 21401

Joint Committee on the Chesapeake and
Atlantic Coastal Bays Critical Area

Chair, Joint Subcommittee on
Program Open Space/Agricultural
Land Preservation

February 15, 2024

Testimony in Favor of SB 439
Family Law - Victims of Domestic Violence Program - Certification and Grant Fund

Chairman Smith, Vice-Chair Waldstreicher, and members of the Judicial Proceedings Committee,

I respectfully request a favorable report of Senate Bill 439 to ensure consistent State funding to certified domestic violence programs which provide life-saving care to victims and families.

Domestic violence programs save lives. Survivors have access to protection from their abusers through emergency housing and support the rebuilding of victims' lives through counseling, advocacy, and education. Programs in Maryland coordinate safe housing for adults and children escaping domestic violence, including emergency shelters, transitional housing, and hotels. Support services are also provided, including therapy by licensed practitioners, support groups, court accompaniment, legal advocacy, bilingual advocacy, support and advocacy for victims of human trafficking, and financial literacy support. Services and placements are coordinated through domestic violence programs who tailor the support to the unique needs of the victims.¹

In 2021, 762 victims of domestic violence were served in just one day in Maryland. In this year, \$3 million in State funding was allocated to support these programs. However, 191 requests for services went unfulfilled due to a lack of resources, 29% of which were unmet emergency housing needs.²

In 2022, State funding was decreased to only \$1 million, a decrease of 66% from the year prior. The monumental consequence was felt by programs and victims across Maryland, as victims served increased by 32% while unmet requests for services increased by 74%. Programs served 1009 victims in just one day in 2022.³

The conclusion is clear - cutting State funding to domestic violence programs leads to more requests for support going unmet and endangers the lives of victims. Further, the ever fluctuating funding allocation stokes uncertainty

¹ <https://www.mnadv.org/>

² <https://nnedv.org/resources-library/16th-annual-domestic-violence-counts-report-maryland-summary/>

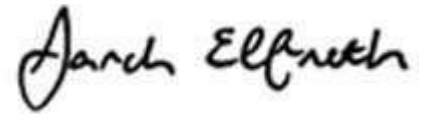
³ <https://nnedv.org/resources-library/17th-annual-domestic-violence-counts-report-maryland-summary/>

among domestic violence programs as the total amount and consequently the grant funding available changes each year. Domestic violence programs need and deserve adequate and reliable funding to complete their mission of protecting and uplifting victims.

Senate Bill 439 establishes a designated Domestic Violence Program Grant Fund to be administered by the Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention (GOCPP). This Fund will be endowed by funding allocated by the Governor up to \$5 million per year as well as any additional funding sources the Executive Director of GOCPP secures for this purpose. Funds will be dispersed through to

I urge a favorable report on Senate Bill 439.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Sarah Elfreth". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Senator Sarah Elfreth
District 30