

BILL NO: House Bill 555
TITLE: Criminal Law – Unauthorized Dissemination of Personal identifying Information
- Prohibition
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: February 13, 2024
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Women’s Law Center of Maryland (WLC) is a non-profit legal services and advocacy organization dedicated to ensuring the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. While our direct representation projects are limited to primarily survivors of domestic violence, our advocacy is in support of gender justice as a whole, because all women are entitled to access to justice, equality, and autonomy. We recognize that all the issues we fight for are interconnected. Women cannot have bodily autonomy unless they have physical safety. They cannot have physical safety without economic security. And they cannot have economic security without bodily autonomy.

The Women’s law Center of Maryland supports HB 555. This legislation prohibits the unauthorized dissemination of personal identifying information to intimidate, abuse, threaten, harass, or frighten another person. This behavior, known as doxxing, is done when an individual or individuals publicly identifies or publishes private information about (someone) especially as a form of punishment or revenge.

The motivation behind doxxing in many cases involving intimate partner violence is revenge and or jealousy. The abuser's intent is to embarrass, shame, and or exploit the victim. The stress and anxiety resulting from doxxing can have lasting psychological effects. Victims may experience symptoms of anxiety, depression and post-traumatic stress disorder (PTSD).

For the above stated reasons The Women’s Law Center urges a favorable report on HB 555.

The Women’s Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.