



BILL NUMBER: HB290

TITLE: Crimes – Interception of Wire, Oral, or Electronic Communications - Exception for Imminent Danger

COMMITTEE: Judiciary

HEARING DATE: January 30, 2024

POSITION: Support

TurnAround, Inc. respectfully requests a favorable report on House Bill 290.

TurnAround is the designated rape crisis center, comprehensive domestic violence center and regional navigator for trafficking survivors in the greater Baltimore region. We serve survivors of intimate partner violence, sexual violence, and human trafficking regardless of age and gender. Services for survivors are offered completely free. We also do extensive work in the community to prevent further violence through awareness building, education, and advocating for policy changes.

Many of the cases we see are of our community members struggling to get cases of sexual violence cases investigated and prosecuted. For a variety of reasons, around 2% of cases of sexual violence end in convictions and only around 6% are investigated by the police. Survivors are required to corroborate nonconsensual sexual encounters that often occur behind closed doors. Without an appreciation for trauma, survivors are questioned on their actions leading up to or during the assault.

In recent years, as a result of the technology boom, video recordings are commonplace. All of us now hold cameras in the palm of our hand. This includes survivors.

Several survivors have come to us at TurnAround with recordings of the domestic violence and sexual violence perpetrated against them. However, due to current law, they cannot introduce the evidence in court, or, more concerning, they could be charged with illegal wiretapping – a felony. As a result of the regularity of facing this issue, we are developing policy on how to handle situations where these recordings are presented as they could pose a risk to my staff.

Current law is harmful to the plight of survivors. To avoid compounding the injustice, current law must be amended to keep up with technology.

For the foregoing reasons, TurnAround seeks a favorable report on HB290.

For more information, please contact:

Amanda Rodriguez, Esq.

arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org

(410) 377-8111 (o)