



**BILL NO:** House Bill 544  
**TITLE:** Criminal Law - Sexual Extortion, Stalking, and Revenge Porn - Statute of Limitations and In Banc Review  
**COMMITTEE:** Judicial Proceedings  
**HEARING DATE:** February 13, 2024  
**POSITION:** **SUPPORT**

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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 House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 544.**

House Bill 544 removes the one-year statute of limitations for sexual extortion, stalking and revenge porn. Each of these insidious offenses often requires forensic investigations by law enforcement to gather sufficient evidence to pursue a prosecution. These offenses may also not be discovered immediately by a victim leading to a delay in reporting. In addition, victims of domestic and sexual violence vastly underreport their victimization to law enforcement for many complex reasons including fear and shame. The one-year statute of limitations creates an unnecessary barrier to prosecution due to the increased time needed for a thorough investigation and the very nature of the underlying offenses.

Victims of domestic violence are often victims of stalking and revenge porn. Stalking increases the risk of domestic violence homicide, and the risk of physical violence increases when a victim is stalked.<sup>1</sup> Revenge porn is one of many abusive tactics of power and control present in domestic violence. In one study 71% of victims report that it was a current or previous romantic partner that had posted a nude image as revenge porn.<sup>2</sup> Sextortion presents with very similar characteristics and investigatory demands to stalking and revenge porn but is less prevalent in domestic violence situations.

MNADV believes that removing the barrier of the one-year statute of limitations in cases of stalking, sextortion, and revenge porn will enable law enforcement the time necessary to complete a thorough investigation and gather the evidence needed in these often complex cases involving technology. No victim should be denied justice due to a necessary but lengthy

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<sup>1</sup> <https://www.stalkingawareness.org/wp-content/uploads/2018/11/Stalking-IPV-Fact-Sheet.pdf>

<sup>2</sup> <https://www.strangulationtraininginstitute.com/revenge-porn-the-latest-research-and-law-enforcement-efforts/>



investigation or because they were not even aware of their victimization until it was beyond the statute of limitations.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence** urges a **favorable report on HB 544.**

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