



# House of Ruth Maryland

## Domestic Violence Legal Clinic

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Bill No.: House Bill 406  
Bill Title: Marriage – Confidential Communication – Criminal Charge  
Committee: Judiciary  
Hearing Date: February 15, 2024  
Position: **FAV**

House of Ruth is a non-profit organization providing shelter, counseling, and legal services to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. House of Ruth has offices in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Prince George’s County, and Montgomery County. House Bill 406 afford victims of domestic violence the option to testify against their abusive spouse in certain criminal proceedings. **We urge the House Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 406.**

It is not uncommon for abusers to apologize to their spouses or otherwise admit to an act of abuse after it has occurred. Under current law, these statements are considered private, marital communications and the criminal defendant can prevent the victim from testifying about them in a court case in which the defendant was charged with a crime against the victim. House Bill 406 would give victims the opportunity, but would not require them, to testify about such admissions in the criminal proceeding in which the abusive spouse is charged with a crime against the victim. This gives victims autonomy to decide whether to provide testimony against their abusive spouses.

**The House of Ruth urges the House Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 406.**