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Testimony in **Support** of

**HB 0482 – Criminal Injuries Compensation Board –
Victims of Nonfatal Strangulation**

Dear Chairman Clippinger, Vice Chairman Bartlett, and Members of the Committee:

I am writing to show my strong support for House Bill 0482 on behalf of State's Attorney Aisha Braveboy and the Maryland State's Attorneys' Association, and to urge a favorable report. I serve as the Chief of the Special Victims Unit in the State's Attorney's Office for Prince George's County and I also sit on the Prince George's County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council.

The State's Attorney's Office for Prince George's County was strongly in favor of strangulation being classified as a First Degree Assault in the State of Maryland. As we know, survivors of non-fatal strangulation are at a higher risk of becoming murder victims. It is important that intervention occurs before survivors become murder victims, whether it is by law enforcement, prosecutors, advocates, medical services, or even friends and family.

One of the most important tools in this fight is a forensic strangulation examination. Not only are these exams important for evidence collection purposes for prosecution, but these forensic exams can be crucial in saving the life of a survivor of nonfatal strangulation. Survivors of strangulation are frequently without visible injuries. However, strangulation can cause severe injuries that can lead to death, even days or weeks after the even occurred.

Survivors of nonfatal strangulation should not be expected to foot the bill in paying for forensic strangulation exams. HB 0482 updates Maryland law so that survivors receive services without charge and so that hospitals can be compensated by the Criminal Injuries Compensation Board. This is the same procedure used for sexual assault forensic examinations.

For the foregoing reasons, I respectfully urge a favorable report on HB 0482.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'J. Garth', with a stylized, cursive flourish extending to the right.

Jessica L. Garth
Chief, Special Victims Unit
State's Attorney's Office for Prince George's County