



Maryland
Hospital Association

February 15, 2024

To: The Honorable Luke Clippinger, Chair, House Judiciary Committee

Re: Letter of Support- House Bill 656- Family Law- Victims of Domestic Violence Program- Certification and Grant Fund

Dear Chair Clippinger:

On behalf of the Maryland Hospital Association's (MHA) member hospitals and health systems, we appreciate the opportunity to comment in support of House Bill 656.

Across the state, hospital-based sexual assault forensic exam ([SAFE](#)) programs employ forensic nurse examiners. These registered nurses receive special training in evidence collection and are experts in delivering trauma-informed care to survivors of violence and abuse. State law ensures survivors of sexual assault have access to emergency medical treatment for their injuries with no out-of-pocket expense. Hospitals care for survivors of all forms of violence. One critical component of this care is safety planning and ensuring a safe discharge plan.

According to the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, there are 19 comprehensive domestic violence programs in Maryland. These programs provide a critical safety net for survivors by offering 24-hour assistance, emergency shelter, counseling, and referrals to additional community resources. These are important wraparound services that benefit survivors long term.

Ensuring a strong safety net for survivors is essential to promote their health and well-being.

For these reasons, we request a *favorable* report on HB 656.

For more information, please contact:

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