



Ending Intimate Partner Violence - Empowering Survivors - Ensuring Safe Communities

BILL NO: House Bill 656
TITLE: Family Law - Victims of Domestic Violence Program - Certification and Grant Fund
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: February 15, 2024
POSITION: FAVORABLE

The 19 comprehensive domestic violence programs in Maryland are an integral part of the critical safety net of services for victims and survivors of domestic violence. House Bill 656 clarifies in statute that there is a Domestic Violence Grant Fund and enables the Governor to include \$5 million as an annual appropriation to the fund. In addition, HB 656 would require the federally recognized state domestic violence coalition to certify programs as comprehensive domestic violence programs.

Pursuant to [Maryland state law](#) and clarified in [COMAR](#), each county and Baltimore City shall be served by at least one comprehensive domestic violence program. To qualify as a comprehensive domestic violence program a service provider must provide a 24-hour hotline, emergency shelter services for a victim of domestic violence and their children, counseling services for a victim of domestic violence, counseling services for an abuser, and additional referrals to other community resources if needed.

Ensuring the financial stability of comprehensive domestic violence programs in Maryland benefits all victim service providers in our state, especially those that provide services to victims of domestic violence. Every service provider fills a unique need for victims such as providing legal services or as a culturally specific program capable of being responsive to the distinctive needs of the population they serve. Comprehensive domestic violence programs offer the panoply of services required in law, including emergency shelter, which is a tremendous resource for victims of domestic violence. One of the many barriers to a victim escaping violence is housing, and comprehensive programs provide that critical resource.

We support the certification of programs as comprehensive domestic violence programs by the federally recognized state domestic violence coalition. It will be beneficial for all community

members to know that there is a service provider that can provide emergency housing, where to refer for abuser intervention, and what number to offer for a 24-hour hotline. Strong and stable comprehensive programs benefit the larger service provider community and the victims we all are committed to serve. **We urge a favorable report on HB 656.**

Submitted By:

Asian/Pacific Islander Domestic Violence Resource Project

CHANA

Human Trafficking Prevention Project

JCADA

Marylanders to Prevent Gun Violence

ROAR

Women's Law Center of Maryland