

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

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House Bill 544 would expand the time to prosecute stalking, sextortion, and revenge porn by eliminating the current one statute of limitations and providing that the State may institute a prosecution for sexual extortion, stalking, or revenge porn at any time. The Women's Law Center supports this bill because our laws must advance to address new ways people seek to commit crimes.

With the development of on-line and technology-based sex crimes, Maryland has created three Maryland statutes responding to sexual violence via technology are: Sextortion, Criminal Law §3-709; Revenge Porn, Criminal Law §3-809; and Stalking, Criminal Law §3-802. While some have non-technology-based application, many of the cases involving these offenses involve pictures of victims on the Internet or traded via phones or online apps. These crimes are all misdemeanors with the standard one-year statute of limitations. Victims of domestic violence are often subject to any variety of these crimes.

But the reality is that many victims don't know for a long period of time that this crime has been committed. Further, once discovered it can take significant resources and time to appropriately investigate and develop a case against the perpetrator.

Meanwhile, the harm to the victims that these crimes can cause is significant. Once on the internet, images may be there forever. This can cause long-lasting effects on the victim.

For these reasons, the Women's Law Center urges a favorable report on HB 544.

***The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.***

