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The Honorable Luke Clippinger
6 Bladen Street
Annapolis, MD 21401

Dear Chair Clippinger and Judiciary Committee Members:


I write in support of HB0482—Criminal Injuries Compensation Board—Victims of Nonfatal Strangulation. I am the Chief of the Special Victims Division for the Montgomery County State's Attorney's Office. My division is responsible for prosecuting cases involving child abuse and exploitation, domestic violence, elder abuse, sexual assault, and human trafficking. Among other multidisciplinary teams, I am a member and former Chair of the Montgomery County Domestic Violence Coordinating Council, and the current Chair of the Montgomery County Elder/Vulnerable Adult Abuse Task Force. I am also a member of the Governor's Family Violence Council.

In 2020, the General Assembly added nonfatal strangulation to the first degree assault statute, recognizing the violence associated with this act, as well as the lethality risks. Surviving victims of nonfatal strangulation are 750% more likely to become a victim of homicide. Men who strangle are more likely to kill their partner, more likely to kill children, and more likely to kill law enforcement officers.

Nonfatal strangulation often leaves no visible injury. A San Diego study found that 50% of victims had no visible injuries, 35% of victims' injuries were unable to be captured by photograph, and only 15% had photographable visible injuries. Visible or not, injuries can be life-threatening, even days, weeks, months, or years after the strangulation event. Victims are at risk of delayed onset of stroke, brain damage, and/or multisystem organ failure. Only 3% of nonfatal strangulation victims seek medical attention. Victims of nonfatal strangulation face significant barriers to reporting and seeking medical attention, including financial, cultural, and fear.

House Bill 482 removes the financial barrier by covering the cost of these critical medical examinations. I urge this Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 482.

Sincerely,


Debbie Feinstein
Chief, Special Victims Division
Senior Assistant State's Attorney