



BILL NO: House Bill 482
TITLE: Criminal Injuries Compensation Board - Victims of Nonfatal Strangulation
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: February 6, 2024
POSITION: **FAVORABLE**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 482.**

Strangulation is an indicator of lethality in domestic violence. Survivors of strangulation are 750% more likely to become a victim of domestic violence homicide. After a strangulation attempt there are numerous medical risks that must be evaluated by a medical provider since most are invisible injuries including damage to the interior neck anatomy, lack of oxygenation, and an increased risk for strokes that can last for months after the assault. Every survivor of strangulation should seek medical attention due to the many and possibly fatal consequences. 1 in 4 women have been victims of severe physical violence, including strangulation, by an intimate partner in their lifetime.

Expanding the existing reimbursement law for forensic exams to include non-fatal strangulation that did not result from an alleged rape, sexual offense, or sexual abuse could save women's lives by removing financial barriers to seeking medical treatment in the immediate aftermath of the violence. When women seek medical treatment, they can also be connected to services which can include safety planning and hopefully prevent a future domestic violence fatality.

The Sexual Assault Reimbursement Unit is distinct from general victim compensation, and it does not require the use of medical insurance first. This is significant for victims of domestic violence who often do not seek medical care due to cost and fear that their abuser might be notified if they use medical insurance. The ability to pay for that evaluation should not be a barrier to treatment and that is what SB 398 addresses.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 482.**

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