



BILL NO: Senate Bill 167
TITLE: Courts - Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: January 15, 2025
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

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 COMMITTEE to favorably Report on SB167.**

Senate Bill 167 redefines a SLAPP (Strategic Lawsuit Against Public Participation) as a lawsuit brought against a person based on an act or statement made in furtherance of their right of petition or free speech under the U.S. Constitution, Maryland Constitution, or Maryland Declaration of Rights in connection with a public issue or issue of public interest.

Domestic violence abusers use countless forms of manipulation and abuse against their victims including the court system. Lawsuits are often intended to intimidate or silence victims who speak out about their experiences or seek justice. Such actions can deter survivors from coming forward or engaging in advocacy, as they may fear legal repercussions. Abusers use the court system as a way to maintain power and control over their victims, bringing their victims into court countless times or threatening them with lawsuits if they seek protective orders. Victims should not fear seeking safety such as in the form of a protective out of fear of legal retaliation from their abuser. While not all of these retaliatory suits will qualify as SLAPP suits, some will, and SB 167 will help discourage this type of litigation abuse and allow victims access to justice.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on SB167.**