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TESTIMONY ON HB SB 739
Domestic Violence – Warrantless Arrests and Victims
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The University of Maryland, Baltimore Center for Violence Prevention (CVP) strongly supports SB 739, which would amend current domestic violence law to alter the definition of “victim of domestic violence” to include individuals with which the person battered has had a sexual relationship with in the past year. This will protect numerous victims whose cases are currently unable to be processed as they are not married to or residing with the perpetrator at the time of their assault.

The Center for Violence Prevention is a community informed initiative of the University of Maryland, Baltimore in collaboration with the R Adams Cowley Shock Trauma Center at the University of Maryland Medical Center – the first of its kind. Our aim is to build resilient communities for all through the prevention and intervention of all forms of violence and trauma. We do this in an interdisciplinary, collaborative fashion where we conduct community-based participatory research, provide creative and impactful education, and inform and advocate for policies that strengthen our communities to prevent violence and trauma. Our support of this bill is in line with the latter.

Warrantless domestic violence arrest laws allow officers to make arrests of alleged offenders of domestic violence without warrants due to probable cause. The discretionary applications of these laws, such as that currently enacted in Maryland, have been found to reduce the risk of intimate partner homicides among current and former spouses. Intimate partner violence is a significant public health and social justice issue. It can have a profound impact on lifelong health, opportunity and well-being. This specific form of domestic violence can occur in any romantic relationship – not just with a person’s spouse. It can include both current and former spouses and dating partners. By including the term “another person with whom the person has had a sexual relationship in the past year,” amending the current law will close the loophole for many victims of domestic violence who may not be married to or residing with their abuser.

For these reasons, the UMB CVP supports SB 739 and respectfully encourages a favorable report.