



Governor's Family Violence Council
100 Community Place, Crownsville, MD 21032

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Lieutenant Governor

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 579

February 27, 2025

Governor's Family Violence Council

The Governor's Family Violence Council expresses strong support for House Bill 579. This legislation enhances the certification process for U Nonimmigrant Status (U Visa) petitions, providing greater transparency and protection for victims of qualifying criminal activities. The bill aligns with the mission of the Governor's Family Violence Council to support the most vulnerable crime victims, promote justice and public safety, and reduce and eliminate abusive behaviors across the state.

House Bill 579 introduces key updates, including expanding certifying entities to agencies with civil, family, and administrative jurisdiction, such as child and adult protective services, the Commission on Civil Rights, and the Maryland Department of Labor. This broadens access to U Visa certification for victims of crimes like domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking while aligning Maryland's statute with federal U Visa guidelines under Title 8, § 214.14 of the Code of Federal Regulations.

The bill also expands eligibility for those who can request certification, allowing attorneys, victim advocates, and representatives to act on behalf of victims. Additionally, it requires certifying officials to provide victims with a written explanation when certification is denied, promoting transparency and accountability and ensuring victims understand the decision, allowing them to seek further recourse if needed. For these reasons, the Governor's Family Violence Council urges a favorable report on House Bill 579. This legislation strengthens protections for Maryland's crime victims, ensuring they receive the support needed to pursue safety and legal relief.

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