



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

ARUNA MILLER, Co-Chair
Lieutenant Governor

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TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF HOUSE BILL 281

January 28, 2025

Governor's Family Violence Council

The Governor's Family Violence Council urges your support for House Bill 281, which addresses the challenges victims of second-degree assault face in seeking justice. This bill closes an unjust gap in Maryland law by allowing the admission of reliable out-of-court statements in second-degree assault cases when the defendant has engaged in wrongdoing intended to and resulting in the unavailability of a victim or witness. By doing so, it aligns with the Council's mission to reduce and eliminate abusive behaviors.

Current law under Courts and Judicial Proceedings 10-901 permits these statements in felony cases but excludes them for second-degree assault, a charge commonly associated with domestic violence. This exclusion creates an arbitrary distinction that undermines justice for victims of intimate partner violence, many of whom face significant barriers, such as threats, coercion, or fear of retaliation, when asked to testify. House Bill 281 ensures that victims' prior statements, made under oath or recorded, can be admitted when the defendant's actions have silenced them.

This legislation strengthens protections for survivors and ensures accountability for abusers who seek to manipulate the justice system through intimidation. By supporting House Bill 281, Maryland takes a crucial step in promoting fairness and safety for victims of abuse. For these reasons, the Governor's Family Violence Council urges a favorable report on House Bill 281.

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