



BILL NO: House Bill 1164
TITLE: Counties and Municipalities - Homelessness - Local Laws (Right to Rest Act)
COMMITTEE: Judiciary
HEARING DATE: March 11, 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 HB 1164.**

House Bill 1164 would prohibit counties and municipalities from enacting or enforcing local laws that prevent individuals from:

- Resting or sleeping in public spaces
- Protecting themselves from the elements in a non-obstructive manner
- Sleeping in legally parked vehicles.

Thirty eight percent (38%) of all domestic violence victims become homeless at some point in their lifetime. In addition, more than 90 percent of homeless women have experienced severe physical or sexual abuse at some point in their lives. Domestic violence survivors can experience obstacles both in looking for housing and maintaining safe housing. These obstacles are often amplified depending on a survivor's race, immigration status, or English language proficiency.¹ Often, survivors who require assistance with housing encounter long wait times, lack of openings, scarcity of affordable housing options, and administrative delays. For example, in one day in 2022, 1642 domestic violence programs were unable to meet over 6748 requests made for housing services. On average, it takes a homeless family 6 to 10 months to secure housing.²

¹ https://www.americanbar.org/groups/domestic_violence/Initiatives/five-for-five/five-facts-homelessness/
Last viewed 2/3/2025.

² Id.



Many survivors of domestic violence are financially dependent on their abuser, often by the latter's design. This dependency often traps survivors in abusive relationships, making it difficult for them to seek help or escape. Also, coping with abuse can lead to poor rental, credit, and employment histories that make it hard for survivors to qualify for rental housing.³ In addition, the scarcity of affordable housing options means that women fleeing domestic violence frequently find themselves without a safe place to go.⁴ Abusers often work to cut off or alienate their partners from their friends and family, weakening or eliminating survivors' supportive social networks. This can leave women without the option to stay with someone they know. In addition, domestic violence shelters are often at capacity, especially during winter, leaving women with few housing alternatives.⁵

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence** urges a **favorable report on HB 1164.**

³ Id.

⁴ Id.

⁵ Id.