



House of Ruth Maryland

Domestic Violence Legal Clinic

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Bill No.: House Bill 847
Bill Title: Criminal Procedure – Domestic Violence Offender Registry
Committee: Judiciary
Hearing Date: February 20, 2025
Position: **UNF**

House of Ruth is a non-profit organization providing shelter, counseling, and legal services to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. House of Ruth has offices in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Prince George's County, and Montgomery County. House Bill 847 would create a domestic violence offender registry. **We urge the House Judiciary Committee to report unfavorably on House Bill 847.**

Although very well-intentioned, this bill has the potential for several unintended consequences that are to the detriment of victims of domestic violence. First, only a small percentage of domestic violence perpetrators are ever convicted, let alone three times. Thus, a registry would under-report and inaccurately reflect the presence of domestic violence in our state and who is perpetrating it. Second, a registry will violate victims' privacy, as the intimate nature of the relationship between perpetrator and victim makes it possible to identify the victim if the perpetrator's identity is public knowledge. Third, this violation of privacy could have a chilling effect and cause victims not to call police or participate in prosecution over concern for the impacts on themselves and/or their children if their identities become known.

The House of Ruth urges the House Judiciary Committee to issue an unfavorable report on House Bill 847.