

BILL NO: Senate Bill 0531
TITLE: Criminal Procedure – Victims of Sexually Assaultive Behavior – Request for Verbal Acknowledgement
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: February 17, 2026
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Women’s Law Center of Maryland is a nonprofit legal organization dedicated to protecting the physical safety, economic security, and civil rights of women and their families across Maryland. Through our legal services, policy advocacy, and education, we work to remove barriers that endanger survivors of abuse and to advance laws that promote safety, stability, and justice. **Senate Bill 531 reflects those priorities by safeguarding survivors’ rights at one of the most vulnerable moments they face — their initial interaction with law enforcement.**

Senate Bill 531 is designed to ensure that survivors are not pressured into relinquishing important rights during their initial interactions with law enforcement. The bill addresses a procedural gap that can result in survivors unintentionally narrowing the scope of a criminal investigation or giving up the ability to pursue future legal remedies. It amends the Maryland Code of Criminal Procedure to prohibit law enforcement from seeking a verbal acknowledgment from a survivor that would absolve the agency of its responsibilities. By eliminating these verbal waivers (while existing law already bars written waivers), the legislation helps ensure that survivors do not inadvertently “sign away” their right to a thorough investigation or a potential lawsuit before they have had the opportunity to process what has happened or seek guidance from an advocate.

This straightforward, common-sense measure eliminates a loophole that disproportionately affects survivors who are often in acute trauma during the earliest stage of an investigation.

For these reasons, the Women’s Law Center of Maryland respectfully urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 531.

The Women’s Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.