

## **Testimony in Support of House Bill 0084/Senate Bill 0138 (PATH Act)**

My name is Alfrieda Hylton, and I am a resident of Prince George's County, Capitol Heights, Maryland. I respectfully submit this testimony in strong support of House Bill 0084 and Senate Bill 0138, the PATH Act.

I was married to my ex-husband for 13 years. For 10 of those years, I endured mental, emotional, and physical abuse at the hands of the person who was supposed to love and protect me. My former husband was a returning citizen, and over time he developed severe alcoholism. His behavior became unpredictable—what I can only describe as a Dr. Jekyll and Mr. Hyde personality. Living in that environment meant constant fear, emotional manipulation, intimidation, and physical harm.

The effects of spousal abuse go far beyond visible injuries. Domestic violence erodes a person's sense of safety, judgment, and self-worth. It creates chronic stress, trauma responses, anxiety, depression, and hypervigilance. When you live under coercion and control, every decision is shaped by fear of retaliation, fear of escalation, fear of survival. Domestic abuse impacts on how you think, how you respond to authority, how you trust others, and how you navigate daily life. These effects do not end when the relationship ends.

By the grace and mercy of my Lord and Savior, I survived and I am no longer a victim. My ex-husband is now deceased, but the trauma from those years did not disappear with him. Domestic violence follows you long after the bruises fade. It shows in your mental health, your ability to feel safe, and sometimes in the choices you make while trying to survive circumstances no one should have to endure.

House Bill 0084 and Senate Bill 0138 are critically important because they recognize the truth that many survivors live with: individuals who are subjected to prolonged abuse, coercion, and fear may become involved in situations or make decisions they would never make if they were safe and free from violence. These bills do not excuse criminal behavior. Instead, they allow the court to consider the full context of a person's life, particularly when domestic abuse is a significant contributing factor.

I strongly believe that mental health therapy is essential—not only for survivors of domestic violence, but also for abusers. Untreated trauma, addiction, and mental illness can destroy families and communities. If we truly want public safety, healing must be part of justice. Addressing root causes helps break cycles of violence rather than allowing them to continue.

The PATH Act offers compassion with accountability. It provides judicial discretion, requires credible proof, and maintains public safety, while recognizing that trauma matters. Survivors deserve to be seen, heard, and treated with dignity by the justice system.

I urge the Committee to issue a favorable report on House Bill 0084 and Senate Bill 0138, so that Maryland can continue moving toward a justice system rooted in healing, truth, and hope.

Respectfully submitted,

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