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Legislative District 30
Anne Arundel County

Judicial Proceedings Committee

Joint Committee on Children,
Youth, and Families



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THE SENATE OF MARYLAND
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SPONSOR TESTIMONY

**Senate Bill 138 - Criminal Procedure –
Sentencing - Domestic Violence as a Mitigating Factor
(Providing Alternatives Through Healing for Justice-Involved Individuals (PATH) Act).
January 27, 2026**

Chair Smith, Vice Chair Waldstreicher and Committee Members

To my esteemed colleagues, it is my privilege to present **Senate Bill 138 - Criminal Procedure - Sentencing - Domestic Violence as a Mitigating Factor (Providing Alternatives Through Healing for Justice-Involved Individuals (PATH) Act).**

For the record, I am Senator Shaneka Henson from the 30th Legislative District of Anne Arundel County, MD.

When you hear from the panel of experts following me, you will understand the depth of research and dedicated work that has gone into developing this important legislation. You also have a copy of the PATH report produced by the organization describing their ongoing work.

This bill fills a critical gap in our current legal process in presenting the full story surrounding the domestic violence incident to the victim. It authorizes the introduction of evidence that a defendant was the victim of domestic violence, and that the domestic violence was a significant contributing factor to the commission of the crime for which the defendant was convicted. A court may impose a reduced sentence, as specified, if the court finds that domestic violence was a significant contributing factor to the defendant's commission of the crime. The bill limits applicability to a defendant convicted of certain crimes and may not be construed to (1) create a separate crime; (2) authorize a court to impose a sentence that exceeds the maximum sentence provided by law; (3) establish a defense to prosecution; (4) diminish the rights of victims of crime; or (5) prohibit a court from considering evidence of domestic violence under any other applicable provision of law.

With us today, to support the approval of this proposed legislation are:

Dr. Carmen Johnson, founder of the organization Helping Ourselves To Transform who has been instrumental in the evolution of this legislation.

- **Professor Olinda Moyd, Esq. , Maryland Alliance for Justice Reform**
- **Professor C.A. Adams leading the Bowie State University Prison Education Program**
- **Lydia Watts (The ROAR Center)**
- **Gretta Gardner (Ujima)**
- **Debroah Williams, CPA, survivor, and Affiliated with Women's National Democratic Committee**

Colleagues, after hearing this incredible testimony and reading the additional letters of support, I respectfully urge a FAVORABLE vote for this important legislation. Thank you.