



**BILL NUMBER:** HB 688

**TITLE:** Intercepted Communications - Penalty

**COMMITTEE:** Judiciary

**HEARING DATE:** 2/24/2026

**POSITION:** FAV

TurnAround, Inc. is the designated rape crisis center for Baltimore City and Baltimore County and a comprehensive domestic violence service provider, offering crisis response, survivor-centered advocacy, legal referrals, trauma-informed therapy, and community education. TurnAround also serves as the Regional Navigator for Baltimore County and Howard County, providing specialized services to survivors of human trafficking, and is a member of the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA), the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV), and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force (MDHTTF).

The Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee brings together federal, state, and local law enforcement, government agencies, and nongovernmental organizations to identify and support survivors and hold traffickers accountable. Its Legislative Subcommittee—comprised of representatives from law enforcement, victim advocacy organizations, service providers, government entities, and faith-based partners—works to strengthen Maryland’s human trafficking laws, collaborate with legislators, and provide testimony on key legislation each session. On behalf of TurnAround, Inc. and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee, we respectfully submit this testimony in support of House Bill 688.

HB 688 reclassifies the offense of willfully intercepting, disclosing, or using the contents of wire, oral, or electronic communications in violation of Maryland’s wiretap law from a felony to a misdemeanor, while maintaining the existing maximum penalty of up to five years of incarceration and a fine of up to \$10,000, or both. The bill does not weaken the underlying prohibition on unlawful interception and disclosure of communications, but instead recalibrates the classification of the offense to reflect proportionality concerns while preserving significant criminal consequences.

Survivors of sexual assault, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, and domestic violence often rely on technology, including recordings and electronic communications, to document abuse, threats, and coercive control. At the same time, overly severe felony classifications can have

unintended consequences when applied to survivors or their support networks who may record communications to protect themselves, seek evidence of abuse, or corroborate disclosures in the absence of other proof.

From our work with survivors, we know that fear of criminalization can deter individuals from seeking help or cooperating with investigations, particularly when they are unsure how courts will view their attempts to document abuse. HB 688 thus supports a more trauma-informed and proportional legal framework around intercepted communications. Continued criminality is problematic for a myriad of reasons, but this bill moves Maryland in the right direction of informed and proportional legal framework around intercepted communications.

HB 688 is consistent with Maryland's broader commitment to balancing privacy protections, accountability for harmful misuse of surveillance, and the realities of how survivors navigate safety in the digital age. For survivors of sexual assault, human trafficking, intimate partner violence, and domestic violence, a legal regime that recognizes gradations of culpability and avoids unnecessary felony exposure can reduce collateral harm while still holding genuinely predatory actors accountable.

For these reasons, TurnAround, Inc. and the Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force Legislative Subcommittee respectfully urge the Committee to issue a Favorable report on House Bill 688.

For further inquiries, please contact Amanda Rodriguez, Esq., Chief Executive Officer, TurnAround, Inc., and Chair, MDHTTF Legislative Subcommittee, at [arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org](mailto:arodriguez@turnaroundinc.org).