



## **TESTIMONY - FAVORABLE**

**HB084 Criminal Procedure - Sentencing - Domestic Violence as a Mitigating Factor (Providing Alternatives Through Healing for Justice-Involved Individuals (PATH) Act)**

**TO: Honorable Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Chair, Delegate Debra Davis, Vice Chair, and Members of the Judiciary Committee**

**FROM: Rev. Linda K. Boyd, member of the Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network (MEPPN)**

**DATE: February 5, 2026**

The Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network supports HB084. Individuals with histories of domestic violence and abuse are often unable to introduce mitigation evidence during plea negotiations, trial, or at sentencing. The PATH Act is a groundbreaking piece of legislation designed to transform Maryland's criminal justice response to survivors of domestic violence – particularly those whose offense is directly linked to abuse, coercion and trauma. This bill establishes that domestic violence may be considered a mitigating factor at sentencing or upon motion of modification for certain offenses, and that the court may depart from mandatory minimums or sentencing guidelines in imposing a just and appropriate sentence.

All too often survivors of domestic violence are arrested, prosecuted, and punished for coerced criminal acts or for acting in self-defense. Sentencing reform for criminalized survivors is growing in several jurisdictions, by passing legislation designed to allow survivors of domestic violence to receive shorter sentences for offenses entwined with their victimization.

For these reasons, we ask the House Judiciary Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 084.

*The Maryland Episcopal Public Policy Network (MEPPN) is a ministry of The Episcopal Diocese of Maryland, The Episcopal Diocese of Washington, and The Delaware-Maryland Synod ELCA*