



Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center, Inc.

Continuing the Missions of the Stephanie Roper Committee and Foundation, Inc.

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March 6, 2026

RE: UNFAVORABLE TO HOUSE BILL 1406

Dear Chair Bartlett and Members of the Committee:

The Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center (MCVRC) respectfully submits this letter in **opposition to House Bill 1406**.

Maryland law already allows individuals to defend themselves when they reasonably believe they face an imminent or immediate threat of harm. That balance is carefully constructed to ensure that true acts of self-defense are protected while preventing individuals from justifying unjustified violence after the fact. House Bill 1406 fundamentally alters that balance.

This bill would allow a person charged with murder, manslaughter, or certain violent crimes to claim self-defense **without proving that they believed the danger was imminent or immediate** if the victim had previously committed an assault or certain sexually assaultive behavior against them. Removing the requirement that the threat be imminent or immediate dramatically expands the scope of self-defense beyond its traditional and necessary limits.

The most troubling aspect of this proposal is how it will operate in cases where the victim is no longer alive to tell their side of the story. When a homicide occurs, the victim cannot testify about what actually happened in the moments leading up to the violence. Allowing a defendant to assert self-defense without demonstrating that they faced an immediate threat invites claims that rely almost entirely on the defendant's narrative of past events. This risks turning homicide trials into inquiries about alleged prior conduct of the victim rather than focusing on whether the killing itself was justified.

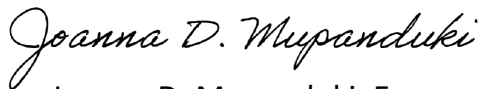
In practice, this change will open the door to **significant victim-blaming**. Defendants may seek to justify lethal violence by pointing to alleged prior acts by the victim, even when those acts are remote in time, disputed, or never adjudicated. When the victim is deceased, there is little ability to challenge those claims. The result is a system in which victims may be put on trial for past allegations while their own voice is permanently silenced.

MCVRC strongly supports laws that protect individuals who must act in true self-defense. However, self-defense must remain grounded in the requirement that the danger be imminent and immediate. Removing that requirement undermines long-standing legal safeguards and risks excusing violent acts that are not truly defensive.

For these reasons, the Maryland Crime Victims' Resource Center respectfully urges the Committee to give **House Bill 1406 an unfavorable report.**

Thank you for your consideration and for your continued commitment to protecting victims of crime and ensuring fairness in our justice system.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joanna D. Mupanduki".

Joanna D. Mupanduki, Esq.

Deputy Director

Maryland Crime Victims Resource Center, Inc.