

BILL NO: House Bill 1363  
TITLE: Criminal Procedure – Domestic Violence Offenders – Registration  
COMMITTEE: Judiciary  
HEARING DATE: March 12, 2026  
POSITION: **OPPOSE**

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The Women's Law Center of Maryland is dedicated to ensuring the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women throughout the State. Through direct legal services, policy advocacy, and education, we work closely with survivors of domestic violence and sexual assault and the organizations that support them. We oppose HB 1363 because a domestic violence offender registry, while seemingly logical, would create a false sense of security, fail to prevent harm, and carry serious risks for victims.

A registry would significantly underrepresent abusive individuals. Many perpetrators never enter the criminal justice system, and convictions are limited. Thresholds requiring multiple offenses would exclude many dangerous individuals, making the registry an unreliable tool for prevention.

Domestic violence is complex. Survivors face the highest risk when leaving an abusive relationship, and a registry cannot account for these dynamics. Public disclosure could expose victims, deter them from seeking help, and increase the risk of retaliation from abusers.

Victims are also at risk of being misidentified as offenders. Studies show that survivors are sometimes arrested when seeking help or defending themselves. Including them in a registry would be both unjust and counterproductive.

Finally, creating and maintaining a registry is an unnecessary use of limited funds. Criminal records are already accessible, and resources would be better spent on effective prevention, offender accountability, and survivor support. A registry cannot replace comprehensive strategies that address the epidemic of domestic violence.

*The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a non-profit legal services organization whose mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. Our mission is advanced through direct legal services, information and referral hotlines, and statewide advocacy.*