



February 5, 2026

**Prince George's County Council Member At-Large Jolene Ivey
Testimony in Support of HB 84 – The PATH Act
(Providing Alternatives Through Healing)**

Chair Bartlett & esteemed members of the Judiciary Committee,

I am writing in support of HB-084. This bill represents an important step toward a fairer, trauma-informed criminal justice system, one that maintains accountability while allowing judges to consider the full context of a person's life.

Domestic violence is often directly connected to criminal behavior. For many survivors, particularly women, prolonged psychological, financial, and physical abuse is not incidental to their offenses but a significant contributing factor. Trauma, coercion, and survival responses frequently shape behavior that later becomes criminalized. HB 84 ensures courts may consider this context so sentencing decisions reflect the realities behind the offense.

The PATH Act prevents re-traumatization within the justice system. Under current law, survivors are often re-traumatized when their experiences of abuse are excluded from sentencing considerations. HB 84 provides judges clear authority to weigh domestic violence as a mitigating factor, allowing sentences that acknowledge harm already suffered rather than compounding it.

This bill strengthens judicial discretion without excusing crime. HB 84 does not eliminate accountability or guarantee reduced sentences. Instead, it gives judges the discretion to impose a sentence that is just and appropriate when domestic abuse significantly contributed to the offense, including the ability, when warranted, to depart from mandatory minimums or sentencing guidelines. Prosecutors retain the right to present rebuttal evidence, and judges remain responsible for weighing all facts.

The bill reflects how survivors actually experience abuse. Many survivors never report domestic violence to law enforcement due to fear or coercion. Limiting evidence to police reports alone would exclude credible cases. The PATH Act appropriately allows courts to consider evidence from counselors, advocates, family members, and others who can provide a fuller and more accurate picture of abuse.

HB 84 allows for limited retroactive review. The bill permits eligible incarcerated individuals to seek resentencing when domestic violence was not fully considered at the time of their original sentence. This narrow provision recognizes that many survivors



Jolene Ivey
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were sentenced without their experiences being acknowledged, while maintaining judicial oversight and prosecutorial participation.

The PATH Act promotes individualized justice, reduces re-traumatization, and aligns Maryland with other states that have adopted trauma-informed sentencing reforms. It balances accountability with fairness and supports a justice system that better understands the root causes of criminal behavior.

I respectfully ask you to support HB 84.

Thank you

Jolene Ivey
Council Member, At-Large
Prince George's County Council