



Bill No.: House Bill 1363
Bill Title: Criminal Procedure - Domestic Violence Offenders - Registration
Committee: Judiciary
Hearing Date: March 12, 2026
Position: UNFAV

House of Ruth is a non-profit organization providing shelter, counseling, and legal services to victims of domestic violence throughout the State of Maryland. House of Ruth has offices in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, Prince George's County, and Montgomery County.

We urge the House Judiciary Committee to submit an unfavorable report on House Bill 1363.

While this bill may initially appear to offer increased transparency or protection, as an organization dedicated to the safety and long-term well-being of domestic violence survivors in Maryland, House of Ruth Maryland does not believe that registries prevent violence, improve survivor safety, and often result in serious unintended harms.

Tennessee recently became the first state to launch a domestic violence offender registry under "Savanna's Law," and currently has one offender listed for the entire state of more than seven million residents.

Registries primarily serve as tools for public shaming rather than effective safety measures. Consequently, establishing a public Domestic Violence Offender Registry may seem protective; however, Maryland-specific data indicate that it will not enhance survivor safety and may, in fact, cause substantial harm.

Domestic violence remains widespread and profoundly underreported in Maryland. During a 24-hour survey conducted in September 2024 by the National Network to End Domestic Violence, participating Maryland programs served 1,229 survivors, received 212 Hotline contacts, and lacked sufficient resources to fulfill 255 service requests, including shelter needs.¹

In fiscal year 2024 alone, House of Ruth Maryland assisted 11,365 individuals, answered 3,884 hotline calls, provided shelter to 377 individuals, and managed over 2,644 legal cases for survivors seeking protective orders and safety. Furthermore, our Training Institute engaged 4,833 individuals across 90 sessions to increase awareness of intimate partner violence.²

These figures reflect the realities we, as frontline advocates, observe daily. Most abuse cases are unreported, underreported, and often do not lead to criminal convictions, meaning a registry will only record a small subset of offenders and foster a false sense of security among the public, while significantly underrepresenting abusive behavior. Moreover, fear of retaliation may lead survivors to

¹ National Network to End Domestic Violence, 19th Annual Domestic Violence Counts Report – Maryland Summary, May 2025, <https://nnedv.org/resources-library/19th-annual-domestic-violence-counts-report-maryland-summary/>

² House of Ruth Maryland, 2024 Annual Report, <https://hruth.org/about-us/annual-report/>



avoid seeking legal protection when such information is publicly accessible. A public registry does not address these urgent requirements.

An article published by Psychology Today in December 2025, titled “What Makes Sex Offender Registries Psychologically Effective,” reviewed the efficacy of sex offender registries. The article reported that meta-analyses across various regions demonstrate that these systems produce only limited and inconsistent reductions in sexual reoffending. It further noted that when registries are primarily used as visibility-based deterrents, they rarely generate significant or sustained decreases in offending, casting doubt on the notion that public exposure alone can modify behavior.³

Instead of enhancing safety, registries risk deterring survivors from seeking assistance and diverting limited resources away from proven methods—legal advocacy, shelter access, economic support, and trauma-informed services. Maryland’s survivors require additional avenues toward safety, not punitive systems that do not accurately reflect the realities of domestic violence.

Resources in Maryland would be far more effectively allocated toward strengthening survivor-centered services, enforcing existing legal protections, and expanding evidence-based prevention initiatives that genuinely reduce harm.

For these reasons, The House of Ruth respectfully urges an unfavorable report on HB 1363.

³ Psychology Today, What Makes Sex Offender Registries Psychologically Effective, December 18, 2025, <https://www.psychologytoday.com/us/blog/emotional-origins-of-violence/202512/what-makes-sex-offender-registries-psychologically>