



**DEPARTMENT OF THE ARMY
US ARMY INSTALLATION MANAGEMENT COMMAND
HEADQUARTERS, UNITED STATES ARMY GARRISON
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IMME-MWA

18 Feb 20

SUBJECT: Hearing Testimony for Senate Bill 569

My name is RoseLee Bovell and I am a Domestic Abuse Victim Advocate or DAVA for the Fort Meade Family Advocacy Program, Victim Advocacy Program. I am writing in support of Senate Bill 569, "Intercepted Communications – Penalties and Admissibility of Evidence".

As a DAVA, I come in contact with an array of people representing the diversity of the US military community. My job allows me to educate military leaders, Service Members, and civilians on the dynamics of domestic violence and how to prevent it from taking place within the family unit. My job also affords me the opportunity to meet with clients one-on-one.

In working with individual clients, I can honestly say that I have had the privilege of working with the bravest, most resilient people I've ever met. It is extraordinarily difficult for someone to come forward and seek advice or support from a complete stranger. It is even harder for someone to come forward when they have or are experiencing abuse at the hands of someone they are supposed to be able to trust. The common thread amongst the clients who come to me is that they are not sure when deciding to make a restricted or unrestricted report that anyone will believe them; that if they come forward their abuser will walk away free or untouched because of a lack of evidence, or evidence that can't be used in a court of law, such as an one-party consent recording of an actual assault, or a confession of said abuse by the offender.

I believe that the passing of Senate Bill 569 is long overdue. Survivors of domestic violence in Maryland need and deserve a sure-fire way to share their experiences, without fear of not being believed by or persecuted by the very people who are supposed to help and protect them. In my line of work, I often guard evidence, such as printed text messages, e-mails, photos, and even audio or video recordings for clients, to ensure that evidence is safely kept and kept confidential. It is extremely disheartening for me to listen to or see recordings, that clearly demonstrate abusive and possibly lethal behavior, and to know because the abuser is unaware that they have been recorded, that the recording cannot serve its true purpose in a court of law. Survivors of domestic violence create these recordings at their own risk, putting themselves in even more danger of physical harm that could possibly result in a fatality. Again, what these survivors are doing is very brave.

At Fort Meade alone, through the Victim Advocacy Program, in FY19 there were 4 Restricted and 14 Unrestricted cases opened by clients seeking support. In FY20, we have had a surge in open cases, with 10 Restricted and 35 Unrestricted cases to date through the Victim Advocacy Program.

However, these numbers are not truly representative of the number of incidents that remain unreported. People who come to me, who do not open a case, frequently cite the failure they have personally witnessed or experienced with the justice system, both military and civilian, in protecting them and helping them move forward on a path of empowerment and self-determination. They tell me about the distrust they have in coming forward, and about the fear

they have of the repercussions they will face from their abuser and as a direct result of the reporting process. I believe in order for more Survivors to feel secure in coming forward about the abuse they have experienced, they must feel as though their voices will truly be heard in a court of law, and that all evidence, including one party-consent recordings, will be taken into consideration.

I am in full support of Senate Bill 569. This piece of legislation could be incredibly powerful in not only supporting Survivors of domestic violence in the military community at Fort Meade, or in Maryland, but could have a far-reaching positive impact on all residents in our state. Passing of this bill could truly foster trust in our legal system, and give many more Survivors the courage to come forward and report.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

RoseLee Bovell

ROSELEE BOVELL

Domestic Abuse Victim Advocate

Fort Meade ACS FAP

The **U.S. Army Family Advocacy Program (FAP)** helps Soldiers and Families recognize and meet the unique challenges of military lifestyles. Our services include seminars, workshops, counseling, and intervention to help strengthen Army Families, enhance resiliency and relationship skills, and improve quality of life.

We are also dedicated to helping Soldiers and Families with the complex challenges related to domestic abuse, child abuse, and neglect. We focus on prevention, education, prompt reporting, investigation, intervention, and treatment.

Victim Advocacy Program (VAP): Provides comprehensive support to victims of domestic abuse, including crisis intervention, safety planning, and help to secure medical treatment for injuries, information on legal rights and proceedings, referral to military and civilian shelters, and other resources. Victim Advocacy services are available 24 hours a day 7 days a week.

Ms. Bovell has worked for the Fort Meade community for three years, as an Employment Readiness Program Manager and currently, as a Domestic Abuse Victim Advocate. Ms. Bovell also has experience in the area of serving survivors of sexual assault. Ms. Bovell is a graduate of Catholic University of America, School of Social Work (2018), Lehman College, City University of New York, (2006), and Oberlin College (2003). She is a native of Washington, DC.