



BILL NO: House Bill 744
TITLE: Courts – Counsel Appearance Fees – Domestic Violence
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: March 23, 2021
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

The Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence (MNADV) is the state domestic violence coalition that brings together victim service providers, allied professionals, and concerned individuals for the common purpose of reducing intimate partner and family violence and its harmful effects on our citizens. **MNADV urges the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue a favorable report on HB 744.**

House Bill 744 would codify in law that courts cannot charge a fee for docketing the appearance of a petitioner’s counsel in domestic violence cases. Attorney appearance fees collected pursuant to Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article §7-204 go the library fund of the county in which the fee was assessed. While it is the general practice in courts in Maryland to not charge petitioner attorney appearance fees for domestic violence cases, the law is not clear in this regard. Family Law Article §4-504 prohibits costs to petitioners for protective order cases. It is silent as to attorney appearance fees. On the other hand, Courts and Judicial Proceedings Article §7-204 outlines the duties of the clerks to collect attorney appearance fees and contains no exception for protective order cases. We do not want any economic barrier to survivors of domestic violence seeking protection from abuse. HB 744 would clarify that petitioner’s attorney appearance fees shall not be assessed in any domestic violence cases.

For the above stated reasons, the **Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence urges a favorable report on HB 744.**