
BILL NO: Senate Bill 484
TITLE: Criminal Procedure - Victims of Crime - Private Room
COMMITTEE: Judicial Proceedings
HEARING DATE: February 10, 2021
POSITION: **SUPPORT**

Senate Bill 484 would require the State Board of Victim Services to develop a poster to notify a victim of the right to request a certain private room, and to provide that private room upon request, in a law enforcement agency when reporting any crime under Title 3 of the Criminal Law Article. The Women's Law Center supports HB 484 because it is important to offer victims a safe place to make reports that can be of a sensitive nature.

The Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services houses the State Board of Victim Services. HB 484 would require that Board to develop a poster advising victims of any crime under Title 3 of the Criminal Law Article of their right to make report in a private setting. Further, it would require law enforcement, as defined in the Public Safety Article, Section 3-201 to post the notice and to provide the private room upon request.

Title 3 of the Criminal Code consists of "other crimes against the person." Included are sexual crimes, kidnapping, abuse and other offensive conduct, stalking and harassment, and crimes against privacy. Relating the facts underlying the charge can be traumatizing, sensitive and difficult to talk about. Victims should be allowed to be in a private setting when reporting these crimes to at least attempt to minimize trauma during the telling of the facts. HB 484 is a way to offer some assistance to these victims.

Therefore, the Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. urges a favorable report on Senate Bill 484.

The Women's Law Center of Maryland is a private, non-profit, membership organization that serves as a leading voice for justice and fairness for women. It advocates for the rights of women through legal assistance to individuals and strategic initiatives to achieve systemic change. The WLC has Protection Order Projects in Baltimore City, Baltimore County, and Carroll County and statewide projects for victims of crime.