



Testimony of American Association of University Women of Maryland

to the

**Maryland General Assembly
House of Delegates Judiciary Committee**

in support of

House Bill 277: Criminal Law – First Degree Child Abuse – Continuing Course of Conduct

January 28, 2021

Submitted by Roxann King, Vice President, Public Policy

The American Association of University Women Maryland (AAUW Maryland) strongly supports 2021 HB 277. Founded in 1881, AAUW's approximately 170,000 members and 1,000 branches nationwide are leaders in gender equity research, advocacy, and philanthropy. In Maryland, we have over 4,000 members and supporters and 24 college and university partners. Our Maryland members are strong advocates for laws that promote the well-being of women and children.

AAUW Maryland believes that continuing abuse of children including fractures, burns, other injuries and other abuse is not the equivalent of a misdemeanor second degree assault. Treating it as such does not provide the protection needed by families. Since second degree child abuse is not presently considered a crime of violence, sentences are at most ten years and a perpetrator can be paroled after two and a half years.

The Maryland General Assembly has the opportunity to update and improve this law to provide better protection for these victims. Treating a continuing course of child abuse as first-degree child abuse would require stiffer penalties that would better protect women and children.

AAUW MD urges that you provide a favorable report on House Bill 277, Criminal Law – First Degree Child Abuse – Continuing Course of Conduct.