



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

P.O. Box 34047, Bethesda, MD 20827

www.womensdemocraticclub.org

**Senate Bill 328 - Criminal Law-Stalking-Definition
Judicial Proceedings Committee – February 8, 2022
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2022 legislative session. WDC is one of the largest and most active Democratic Clubs in our County with hundreds of politically active women and men, including many elected officials.

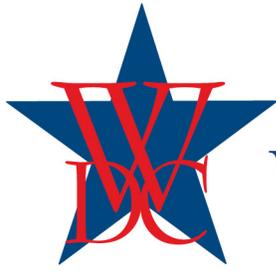
WDC urges the passage of SB328, which alters the definition of “stalking” to include conduct that occurs through the use of electronic communication and tracking/location devices. WDC members were surprised to learn that Maryland law is currently silent on this form of stalking. Women urgently need this bill to pass to protect electronic stalking victims who are threatened and harmed by these acts. While statistics are scarce, a CDC study estimated that 16% of women and 5% of men have been subjected to some form of cyberstalking. The study said, shockingly, that 30% of Native American women in the US had been victims.

A recent *Baltimore Sun* article about a cyberstalking case in Silver Spring glaringly pinpoints the harm that can be done to victims:

Less than two months after their office romance ended, Ahmad Kazzelbach began tampering with the email and social media accounts of the Baltimore woman who broke up with him. He changed her Instagram username to include the word “whore.” That was only the start of a vicious cyberstalking campaign that would escalate steadily over the next year. **Before FBI agents arrested her ex-boyfriend, the woman was wrongfully arrested twice and spent four nights in jail based on a string of false police reports that he made** (emphasis added). Kazzelbach, 27, of Pasadena, Maryland, was sentenced on Monday to four years in prison for his online harassment of the woman.

This defendant faced criminal charges because cyberstalking is a federal crime. It needs to be a crime under Maryland state law as well.

Common examples of stalking using electronic means include, but are not limited to, hiding a GPS tracker in a victim's car; turning on the victim's phone location application to track whereabouts; putting a camera or listening device in a child's toy to hear/watch what happens in a victim's home and installing spyware on a victim's computer. Maryland agencies that provide services to abused women and their families such as House of Ruth Maryland and the Easton-based Mid-Shore Council on Family Violence (MSCFV), report numerous cases of perpetrators using all the above methods and more. These organizations report that their clients live in almost-constant fear, never knowing when or how an abuser might conceal a tracking or listening device and use it to stalk them. Victims who move to a secure location or change their



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routines to avoid abusers are left to wonder if their new location is truly safe or if their abusers will learn where they are by using a variety of technologies to determine their place of residence.

Maryland electronic stalking victims deserve better.

We ask for your support for SB328 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Respectfully,

Leslie Milano
President