



VICTIM SERVICES ADVISORY BOARD

March 29, 2022

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
Room 101, House Office Building
Annapolis, Maryland 21401

Re: Support– SB134 - Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission - Training Requirements - Electronic Stalking

Dear Chairman Clippinger:

Senate Bill 134 requires the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission to require certain entrance-level and in-service police training conducted by the State and each county and municipal police training school to include certain training related to the criminal laws concerning stalking as they pertain to electronic surveillance or tracking. Included among the training is knowledge of the services available to victims, related prevention methods for victims, and how victims may request assistance to identify and preserve digital evidence.

The Montgomery County Victim Services Advisory Board advises the County Council and County Executive on assisting the needs of victims of a broad range of violent crimes, including rape, domestic violence, sexual assault, and human trafficking. The number and severity of sexual assault and domestic violence cases referred to the Montgomery County HHS Victim Assistance and Sexual Assault Program and the Abused Persons Program has continued to increase substantially during the pandemic, with more than 1800 requests for help in FY21 and 500 requests already received during the first quarter of FY 22. More than 2,500 domestic violence protective order petitions were filed in Montgomery County District Court in 2021. The severity of cases has also become more critical, with increases in homicides, domestic violence, sexual violence, and more reports of strangulations.

Maryland Criminal Law §3-802 defines stalking as “a malicious course of conduct that includes approaching or pursuing another where the person intends to place or knows or reasonably should have known the conduct would place another in reasonable fear of suffering serious bodily injury, assault, rape or sexual offense, false imprisonment, or death, or that a third person likely will suffer any of the acts listed.” Stalking can take many forms and as such, requires a special understanding and skillset by the officers who are responding to such allegations. This bill will not only provide necessary training to police officers on rapidly evolving electronic surveillance technology, but will give victims the information and resources they need to help them in their recovery and in any related court cases.

VSAB asks the committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 134.

Sincerely,

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