

**HB 911**  
**Judicial Proceedings Committee**  
**Peace Orders – Visual Surveillance**  
**Written Testimony in SUPPORT**  
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**Just Stalking: Maryland Resources**

Chair Clippinger and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony for House Bill 911. I am providing this testimony in my capacity as Executive Director for Just Stalking: Maryland Resources, as well as being a victim of stalking for over 15 years.

When I was 16, I met the person who would become my stalker for approximately *half* of my life, at an esteemed internship – for almost three years I attempted multiple response tactics to manage their ‘pursuits’ and ‘intrusions,’ including **visual surveillance**, before I recognized I needed to ‘move outward,’ *and* take legal action. *No one* told me what to do. Per our *limited* understanding of the legal systems, my family decided my best option was to obtain a “stay-away order,” a **Peace Order**.

According to a meta-analysis, **one in six** professionals have experienced stalking, as in **my** case (Jutasi & McEwan, 2021). Researchers found **no evidence** any *particular* profession is at higher risk; a **range** of professions may be at increased jeopardy of different motivations of stalking-victimization.

Victims are **not** a monolith, stalkers’ typologies and motivations *must* be taken into consideration. Without this, we leave victims at a disadvantage in understanding issues such as persistence and recurrence which have particular importance for **Peace Orders**.

Among acquaintance stalkers, including the professional typology, duration of stalking behavior has been found to be **longer** than other groups; **42% persisted longer than one year**. Due to my **15 years of stalking experience**, I started a nonprofit to serve victims, Just Stalking: Maryland Resources.

I didn’t initially recognize my Peace Order would not cover **visual surveillance**, which would have addressed my residence and workplace without special provisions that required the Judge to identify them specifically. The judge also included my mother’s residence as well as frequently visited places. However, due to this being a special circumstance, law enforcement were seemingly unprepared and lacked training for this level of security, thereby allowing this person to continue violating the Peace Order **repeatedly**, despite coordination with the State’s attorney’s office, Victim’s Advocates, and multiple police stations.

This creates an extortionary trauma for the victim(s), who are responsible for **identifying the course conduct**, conceptualizing stalking as a **construct**, differentiating ‘**myths**’, and **stalking from harassment**. *Then*, realizing the behavior has passed the ‘**two-week stalking threshold**’ **therefore is unlikely to cease**, *thus*, **persisting for an average of one year** (Purcell, et al., 2004). *Additionally*, identifying possible **escalating behaviors** specifically, **contacts &**

**approaches.** *Furthermore*, there is the requisite request to cease contact, which is *not* a legal requirement, but *is* a societal expectation.

There is a *myth* that stalking *always* involves violence, direct, or at least implied threats, but these are specific to typologies, motivations, and other factors. **This** inhibits many victims from initially seeking formal or informal resources, thereby creating additional barriers, such as requiring **recurrent traumatization**, as victims seek **continual support** by not only requesting services, but having to face their stalker, *repeatedly*, **every six months**, at the behest of the court. This is arguably cruel for the victim. The court then becomes an *unintentional* ‘proxy,’ *complicit* in the stalking behavior.

Most recently, after being released from prison, on charges *related* to their alleged stalking behavior, but *not* a stalking conviction *specifically*, they came **directly to my home**, *as* I was *not* given information about our State’s **Address Confidentiality Program**.

I was in **shock**, I was given **no warning**, through any of the systems I was under the impression were designed and **in place** to have informed me of their impending release, and imminent arrival. I could *not* wrap mind around the idea, at such a late hour, I did *not* have an active Peace Order in place, *but it had been* **more than six months**.

After **10 years** of **persistent-professional-intimacy-seeking-stalking**, it became not *only my responsibility* to obtain an updated **Peace Order**, but also necessary to involve an associate from *another state* to serve it. Despite *continued* visual surveillance of my home for over a month, and residence in a neighboring county, police in my county seemed unable to coordinate this effort.

Law enforcement show unwavering support, nonetheless there appears to be **systemic barriers preventing** adequate communication for **delivery and enforcement of Peace Orders**. Additionally, there is the *perception* that these orders are a lower priority, because they are deemed ‘*civil*’ *rather* than ‘*criminal*’ and alleged offenders may present as harmless, despite knowledge of an active order.

Thank you for the opportunity to support HB 911.

#### References

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