



2017 General Assembly Legislative Wrap Up

Founded with the mission to promote and protect the legal rights of women, the Women's Law Center of Maryland (WLC) is actively engaged in advocacy work with the General Assembly to increase justice and fairness for Maryland women and families. As always, the WLC played an active role in Annapolis this year, monitoring 147 bills, providing written testimony on 89 bills, and oral testimony in 36 hearings. In addition, 27 legislative alerts were sent via email and posted on Facebook to galvanize grassroots action. Ultimately, 13 bills have been sent to the Governor's desk for signature, and one additional bill has already been enacted into law without his signature. Additionally, all the bills opposed by the WLC were once again defeated. Here are some of the bills we are most excited about, followed by a summary of all the legislation we worked on this session.

BILL NO: House Bill 1/Senate Bill 230
TITLE: Labor and Employment – Maryland Healthy Working Families Act
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED

After five years, the Maryland Healthy Working Families Act finally passed through the General Assembly. This law will require employers to provide employees with up to five earned safe and sick days per year to address their own health needs, to care for family members, and to deal with the effects of domestic violence. The WLC has always been a supporter of this legislation that provides a reasonable and comprehensive approach to ensuring an important benefit that protects the health and safety of families, workers, and the community.

BILL NO.: House Bill 613/Senate Bill 363
TITLE: Pharmacists - Contraceptives - Prescribing and Dispensing
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED

In a move that increases access to contraception, this law authorizes pharmacists to prescribe and dispense commonly used contraceptives – including the pill, patch, and ring without a visit to a doctor. It will require regulations and a self-screening risk assessment to determine when a woman requires referral to a primary care physician for further consultation. Family planning has well-established benefits for women, families, and communities, including in education, workforce participation, income and family stability.

Accessibility remains one of the biggest barriers to women accessing birth control; increasing the ability of women to access contraception can provide stability and security for families and allow families to control their reproductive choices by reducing unintended pregnancies.

BILL NO: House Bill 293/Senate Bill 274
TITLE: Family Law - Divorce - Domestic Violence Order
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED (House version) – Signed into law on May 4, 2017

Under current law, a judge is prohibited from admitting a protective order into evidence in support of a party's claim for divorce. It also prevents a judge from considering a party's compliance with a protective order as grounds for granting a divorce. This bill repeals that unnecessary and arcane prohibition, allowing the introduction of a protective order into evidence.

BILL NO: House Bill 972/Senate Bill 811
TITLE: Civil Cases - Maryland Legal Services Corporation Fund - Surcharges - Repeal of Sunset
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED

This law helps to generate revenue for the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) through filing fee surcharges, and will preserve a critical funding source for services that ensure access to justice for low income Marylanders, such as those provided by the WLC.

Domestic Violence

BILL NO: House Bill 294/Senate Bill 224
TITLE: Public Safety - Regulated Firearms - Definition of Convicted of a Disqualifying Crime
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED

The Maryland legislature has already created laws that aim to keep guns out of the hands of domestic abusers, and this law is a small, but crucial fix, to a gap in existing law. While it does not seek to remove guns or prohibit ownership from *all* gun owners, it does seek to expand the list of disqualifying crimes that preclude gun ownership. Individuals who receive Probation Before Judgment for domestically-related second degree assault will now also be disqualified from owning a gun. When more than half of the women murdered in the US are killed by intimate partners or family members, this small step can go a long way towards ensuring their safety.

BILL NO.: House Bill 498/Senate Bill 562

TITLE: Health Care Decisions Act - Advance Directives and Surrogate Decision Making - Disqualified Individuals
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED

This law will modify the Maryland's Health Care Decisions Act, by disqualifying abusers who have a protective order taken out against them from serving as a surrogate health care decision maker for their victim. It further disqualifies a spouse when the parties have executed a separation agreement or when a complaint for divorce has been filed by either the patient or the spouse. The WLC supports this as it will allow health care providers to make the best decisions possible for their patients.

BILL NO: House Bill 1163/Senate Bill 976
TITLE: Criminal Procedure - Conditional Release - Electronic Monitoring (Amber's Law)
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED

Amber's Law will allow victims of crime to request "stay away" technology that tracks a defendant and notifies the victim if the defendant is at or near the location from which the defendant has been ordered by the court to stay away.

BILL NO: House Bill 827
TITLE: Public Safety- Secretary of State Police – Temporary Firearms Training Waiver
POSITION: OPPOSE
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 827 would have waived the training a person requires before obtaining a handgun permit in certain cases of domestic violence. The WLC opposed House Bill 827 because of the overwhelming evidence that the presence of handguns increases rather than decreases safety for domestic violence victims. The WLC has long held the position that more guns is not a good solution to domestic violence.

BILL NO: House Bill 48
TITLE: Criminal Procedure – Shielding – *Nolle Prosequi*
POSITION: OPPOSE
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 48 would have mandated shielding any criminal matter, including domestically related cases, where the disposition is a *nolle prosequi* (nol pros). As the bill made no exceptions for domestically-related crimes, the WLC could not support it, as it posed an increased risk of harm to victims of repeat domestic violence.

BILL NO: House Bill 803/Senate Bill 900

TITLE: Family Law – Domestic Violence – Education and Definition of Abuse
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 803/Senate Bill 900 would have added harassment and malicious destruction of property to the definition of abuse in the existing domestic violence laws, aiding victims of intimate partner violence in situations that currently would not qualify for a protective order. The WLC frequently sees cases where respondents repeatedly call a victim's work place, slash tires, destroy the interior of the home, and engage in persistent harassing behavior. Unfortunately, this type of behavior is not enough to warrant a protective order, despite the fact that the behavior is intentionally putting the victim in fear.

BILL NO: House Bill 1057
TITLE: Domestic Violence – Permanent Final Protective Order
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 1057 would have modified the current permanent protective order law to add kidnapping as one of the crimes committed that would allow for a petitioner to seek a permanent protective order. In addition, it would alter the circumstances under which a petitioner could seek a permanent protective order. It would have been a reasonable alteration to our laws that would allow deserving survivors of domestic abuse to achieve some long-term measure of safety and freedom from fear.

BILL NO: House Bill 1297
TITLE: Domestic Violence – Petitioner – Attorney for the Child
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 1297 would have expressly permitted court-appointed attorneys for a child to petition the court for relief from domestic violence on behalf of the minor child. The WLC supported this attempt to amend the current law because children's best interest attorneys are often in the best position to know that a child they are representing needs protection from another party.

BILL NO: Senate Bill 219
TITLE: Criminal Procedure – Pretrial Release – Victim Protection
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

Senate Bill 219 would have provided a way for victims of crime to be notified when defendants are released at their initial appearance before a commissioner. The WLC supported Senate Bill 219 as a further step in increasing safety for victims of crime, especially victims of domestic violence.

BILL NO: Senate Bill 524

TITLE: Criminal Law - Committing a Crime of Violence in the Presence of a Minor - Repeal of Residence Requirement
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

Under current law, a defendant convicted of committing a crime in front of minor, *in the child's home*, is subject to an increased penalty. SB 524 would have allowed the court to impose an enhanced penalty on a defendant who commits a crime of violence *anywhere* within the site or earshot of a minor, wherever the minor is situated.

BILL NO: Senate Bill 727
TITLE: Criminal Procedure – Firearms – Transfer
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

Under current law, certain convicted defendants are not allowed to own guns and therefore must surrender any guns in their possession to the State. Senate Bill 727 would have created a process for the relinquishment of firearms in these circumstances. The WLC supported SB 727 as it provided a framework for ensuring that abusers who are disqualified from gun ownership properly surrender their guns, thereby increasing the safety for victims of domestic violence.

BILL NO: Senate Bill 1154
TITLE: Criminal Law – Assault in the First Degree – Strangulation
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
OUTCOME: FAILED

This law would have added the crime of strangulation to the definition of first degree assault. While the WLC supported SB 1154 in theory, it was concerned about language in the bill requiring specific intent to cut off the airway. As such, the WLC urged amendments, using language from prior years, that defined strangulation as applying pressure to the throat or neck of another person that causes another person to lose consciousness, that substantially impedes the breathing or blood circulation, or causes the person to defecate, urinate or vomit. That language would have allowed for more prosecutions and convictions of this very dangerous act that occurs frequently in intimate partner violence cases.

Family Law

BILL NO: House Bill 799/Senate Bill 861
TITLE: Family Law – Marriage – Age Requirements
POSITION: OPPOSE
OUTCOME: FAILED

Current law states that an individual younger than age 15 may not marry, an individual age 15 can marry only with *both* parental consent *and* if the woman to be married is pregnant/has given birth, and an individual age 16 or 17 may not marry unless the woman is pregnant/has given birth, *or* if they have parental consent. This legislation sought to remove the options for parental consent and medical certification and create a blanket ban on marriage for any party that is under the age of 18 under the guise of preventing forced marriages. While the WLC clearly opposes the coercion of any woman into marriage, laws already exist that prevent statutory rape and criminalize forced marriages, while this law would shut out legitimate motives for marriage, including cultural, economic, and religious reasons. We strongly believe in the autonomy of women to choose what is best for them given their personal situation, culture, and needs. Maturity varies by the individual and while it may be tempting to insert our beliefs and judgments into the lives of young women, we believe they deserve respect and agency over their own lives. **In other words, we trust women over all else.**

BILL NO: Senate Bill 905
TITLE: Legal Decision Making and Parenting Time - Shared Parenting Time for Family Equality Act
POSITION: OPPOSE
OUTCOME: FAILED

Senate Bill 905 would have created a presumption of joint legal custody and physical custody for equal periods of time for each parent. The WLC continues to oppose the presumption for joint legal and equal physical custody created by this Bill, which is particularly egregious in that there is no exception for situations in which there has been domestic violence. The current standard of “best interests of the child” is the most child centered and appropriate standard for custody decision-making.

BILL NO.: House Bill 508/SB368
TITLE: Family Law – Legal Decision Making and Parenting Time
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

Contrary to the SB905, House Bill 508 and Senate Bill 368 would have provided a much needed overhaul and update to our custody laws in Maryland. The WLC supported this legislation because it would have codified existing Maryland case law regarding custody determinations into a statute based on the best interests of the child standard. It would also make language changes to better identify and support the relationships between parents and children. This proposed law was the revised product of a one year Child Custody Decision-Making Commission that determined the “best interests of the child” standard remains the best way for courts to make custody decisions.

BILL NO: House Bill 749
TITLE: Family Law - Divorce - Ownership of a Pet
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 749 would have authorized a court to grant sole or joint ownership of a pet to parties in a divorce proceeding. The WLC supported this bill because we recognize that pets are part of the family for many owners, and resolving this issue is sometimes an impediment to resolving a divorce. In addition, pets can be used coercively in relationships but knowing that the court can decide the fate of pet may assist certain people in ending a bad marriage.

BILL NO: Senate Bill 499
TITLE: Family Law - Divorce on Grounds of Mutual Consent - Court Appearance
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

In 2015, the legislature enacted a new ground for divorce, commonly known as mutual consent to divorce, that allows parties without children to obtain a divorce, so long as they resolve all issues relating to alimony and marital property, without having to wait the normal one year of separation. Senate Bill 499 would have amended that law to do away with the requirement that both parties must attend the final hearing on divorce. The WLC supports this change because when all issues are resolved and the parties have entered into a separation agreement, there is no need for both parties to attend a perfunctory hearing, particularly when that is not required in other divorce cases.

Employment and Economic Security

BILL NO.: House Bill 418/Senate Bill 294
TITLE: Child Care Subsidy Program – Reimbursement Rate Adjustments
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED – Signed into law on April 18, 2017

Countless studies have shown that quality childcare provides children with the early education and skills necessary to succeed in the classroom, and allows parents to work and provide for their families. Additionally, new studies show that daughters with working mothers complete more education and are more likely to be employed as adults themselves. Yet Maryland ranks at the very bottom of all states when it comes to supporting low-income parents who are struggling to afford childcare, and hasn't adjusted its income limits for subsidies since 2002. This law sets forth a mechanism by which the State Department of Education analyzes and establishes reimbursement rates for the Maryland Child Care Subsidy Program. Because the WLC recognizes that investing in early childhood education, and allowing working parents to place their children in affordable, quality health care, is in the best interest of our community at large, the WLC proudly supported this legislation.

BILL NO: House Bill 916/Senate Bill 534
TITLE: Motor Vehicle Insurance - Discrimination in Underwriting and Rating - Prohibitions
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS

OUTCOME: PASSED

As originally introduced this session, HB916/SB534 would have prohibited auto insurance companies from refusing to underwrite, canceling, refusing to renew, rating a risk, or increasing the renewal premium based on: the credit history, marital status, occupation, or education level of the insured. The WLC supported amendments that were introduced adding gender to the list of protected status, thereby prohibiting motor vehicle insurers from charging higher insurance rates of women, for no reason other than the fact they are women. However, those limitations were stripped from the bill during the legislative session so that the final bill only prohibits auto insurance companies from increasing the premium for an insured who becomes a surviving spouse. Historically, insurance companies have charged higher rates for women whose husbands die. While the WLC approves of the new prohibition, it clearly would have preferred the broader list of prohibitions that would have gone farther to end discrimination against women.

BILL NO: House Bill 317
TITLE: Labor and Employment - Wages and Benefits - Preemption of Local Authority
POSITION: OPPOSE
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 317 was an attempt to limit local jurisdictions from enacting minimum wage and benefit laws and prohibiting the Commissioner of Labor and Industry from enforcing such laws. As local governments are often uniquely able to be on the forefront of passing progressive legislation that benefits the public and their constituents, this legislation would prevent local municipalities from leading the way and responding to constituents' needs. For those reasons, The WLC opposed HB 317.

BILL NO: House Bill 382/Senate Bill 305
TITLE: Commonsense Paid Leave Act
POSITION: OPPOSE
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 382/Senate Bill 305 was the Governor's version of an earned sick leave bill. However, it fell short of substantively addressing the needs of working families, instead maintaining the status quo for the vast majority of workers. If enacted, it would have provided a mechanism for employees to earn paid sick leave only if their employer employed 50 or more employees at each job location, and would do nothing to cover the hundreds of thousands of Maryland workers employed by smaller businesses, including most restaurant workers, 80% of whom earn no sick leave. Additionally, it would have excluded hundreds of thousands of workers who are employed for less than 30 hours per week.

BILL NO.: House Bill 214
TITLE: Discrimination in Employment – Conditions Related to Pregnancy or Childbirth
POSITION: SUPPORT

OUTCOME: FAILED

This bill sought to build on legislation passed in 2013 requiring reasonable accommodations for pregnant workers by creating a small expansion of the law to cover *all* pregnant women with a medical need for accommodation (not just those with a separate medical condition or complication brought on by pregnancy) and by clarifying the reasonable accommodations necessary for women who pump or breast feed.

BILL NO.: House Bill 398/Senate Bill 404
TITLE: Labor and Employment – Equal Pay – Job Announcement and Salary History Information Disclosures
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 398/Senate Bill 404 sought to build on the progress made last year to eliminate the gender pay gap in Maryland by eliminating employers' rote use of salary history when establishing base pay. Requiring employers to provide job applicants with a salary range, or a minimum rate of pay, levels the playing field for potential job candidates, many of whom may otherwise be starting with a disadvantage due to prior discrimination or time spent outside of the workforce. When employers set the salary range independently, salaries more accurately reflect the skills and qualifications of employees.

BILL NO.: House Bill 865
TITLE: Higher Education - Financial Aid - In-State Students (The Jill Wrigley Memorial Scholarship Expansion Act)
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

Jill Wrigley was a remarkable woman and attorney dedicated to social justice and increasing access to the legal system to everyone regardless of gender, ethnicity, or socio-economic status. In 2006, she worked tirelessly to establish the WLC's Employment Law Hotline, a one-of-a-kind hotline staffed entirely by experienced volunteer attorneys. Ms. Wrigley was equally committed to education and to ensuring that all people were provided the same opportunities to learn and work. The Jill Wrigley Memorial Scholarship Expansion Act would have enabled more individuals to obtain the education they need to thrive in our society. The WLC is proud to have been associated with Ms. Wrigley and proud to continue to honor her work and her passion.

BILL NO.: House Bill 919/Senate Bill 971
TITLE: Procurement - Nondiscrimination Clauses and State Policy Prohibiting Discrimination ("Women on Boards")
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 919/Senate 971, would have prevented companies seeking to contract with the state from engaging in discriminatory practices in their selection of directors, similar to an already-existing prohibition on discriminatory employment practices. The goal of this legislation was to encourage diversification on corporate boards, as a 2015 survey of Fortune 1000 companies showed that only 17.9% of corporate directors were women.

BILL NO: House Bill 1416/Senate Bill 962
TITLE: Labor and Employment - Payment of Minimum Wage Required
(Fight for Fifteen)
POSITION: SUPPORT WITH AMENDMENTS
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 1416/Senate Bill 962 would have raised the statewide minimum wage rate to \$15.00/hour by the year 2022, and establish a methodology for increasing the minimum wage rate annually to assist the approximately 33% of Maryland workers earning minimum wage (60% of whom are women).

Reproductive Justice

BILL NO: House Bill 1083/Senate Bill 1081
TITLE: Health – Family Planning Services – Continuity of Care
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED - ENACTED INTO LAW APRIL 6, 2017

House Bill 1083/Senate Bill 1081 establishes the Family Planning Program in the Department of Health and Mental Hygiene to ensure the continuity of family planning services in the State and making clear that family planning access remains a priority for Maryland. Under the bill, family planning providers, such as Planned Parenthood of Maryland, can continue to receive the funding necessary to provide affordable care to patients who are struggling to make ends meet -- regardless of whether the federal government enacts a law that withdraws federal funds from family planning providers. All individuals -- no matter their health insurance coverage or size of their wallet -- should be able to access essential health care and have the resources they need to make the important decision as to whether to start a family.

BILL NO.: House Bill 616/Senate Bill 232
TITLE: Education – Pregnant and Parenting Students – Attendance Policy
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED

Under current law, excused school absences include only the illness of the student and court summons; there are no provisions allowing for time off a parenting student might need in order to care for their child. With approximately 30% of teen girls who drop out of school citing pregnancy as the key reason, this legislation will help keep young women in school by requiring counties to create policies that would excuse pre- and post-natal exams, as well as labor and delivery.

BILL NO: House Bill 1067
TITLE: Public Schools and Shelters - Homeless Girls and Women - Feminine Hygiene Products
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED

This law requires the Department of Human Resources to make free feminine hygiene products available to homeless female students in public schools, and to female residents in homeless shelters. The WLC supports this legislation as approximately forty percent of Maryland's homeless population is composed of women and families, many of whom would otherwise be unable to obtain feminine hygiene products.

BILL NO: House Bill 1167/Senate Bill 841
TITLE: Unborn Child Protection From Dismemberment Abortion Act of 2017
POSITION: OPPOSE
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 1167/Senate Bill 841 would have outlawed the safest method of performing abortions on women who are 14 weeks or more pregnant, creating undue risks on woman's health, and invading very personal decisions that women have a constitutional right to make. Doctors, who are always in the best position to determine the appropriate medical course of action, should be free to make medical decisions without fear of litigation from disgruntled spouses or parents of the pregnant woman.

BILL NO: House Bill 547
TITLE: Pain Capable Unborn Child Protection Act
POSITION: OPPOSE
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 547 would have outlawed abortion after twenty weeks of gestation, criminalizing doctors, and requiring onerous reporting for no discernible reason. It is based on contested medical assertions and invades very personal decisions that women have a constitutional right to make and should make in consultation with their doctors.

BILL NO: House Bill 95
TITLE: Sales and Use Tax – Hygienic Aids – Exemptions
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 95 would have expanded the current exemption from the sales and use tax for the sale of tampons and sanitary napkins to include the broad array of feminine hygiene products currently available to women, preventing Maryland women from being unfairly subjected to sales tax just for choosing the type of feminine hygiene products that work best

for them. No feminine hygiene products should be deemed a luxury, and therefore none should be subject to the sales and use tax.

BILL NO.: House Bill 365
TITLE: Montgomery County – Family Life and Human Sexuality Curriculum – Affirmative Consent
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 365 sought to require the Montgomery County Board of Education to include instruction related to affirmative sexual consent as part of existing Family Life and Human Sexuality curriculum in grades 7 and 10. Historically, sex education courses have focused on educating young women on how to avoid sexual assault, whereas this would be more proactive; rather than teach youth how to handle a negative situation (where “no means no”), it sought to prevent the negative situation to begin with, by advancing the concept of affirmative consent (“yes means yes”).

BILL NO.: House Bill 1205
TITLE: Public Institutions of Higher Education - Access of Students to Emergency Contraception
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 1205 would have provided students at public colleges and universities in Maryland 24/7 access to emergency contraception (EC). Emergency contraception is a safe and effective tool in preventing pregnancy, and is most effective when used as soon as possible after having unprotected sex. But normal operating hours of student health centers are limited and often not open during the times students would need EC the most: in the evenings and on weekends.

BILL NO.: House Bill 1560
TITLE: Education - Family Life and Human Sexuality Curriculum – Consent
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

Like HB365, House Bill 1560 would have required each county board of education to provide age appropriate instruction on consent as part of the Family Life and Human Sexuality curriculum in grades 5 and higher in all public schools statewide.

BILL NO.: Senate Bill 52
TITLE: Sales and Use Tax – Exemption – Disposable Medical Supplies and Condoms
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

Senate Bill 52 would have provided an exemption from the sales and use tax for the sale of condoms, ensuring Maryland women and men more affordable access to condoms and

thereby allowing them to make better, healthier decisions regarding their sexual and reproductive lives.

Sexual Assault

BILL NO: House Bill 255/Senate Bill 349
TITLE: Criminal Procedure – Sexual Assault Victims’ Rights – Disposal of Rape Kit Evidence and Notification
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED

House Bill 255/Senate Bill 349 requires sexual assault evidence collection kits (rape kits) to be maintained for 20 years in all jurisdictions, and requires notice to victims before their destruction. It is a necessary alteration in our laws to ensure the preservation of this important evidence.

BILL NO: House Bill 369/Senate Bill 316
TITLE: Courts - Evidence of Sexually Assaultive Behavior - Admissibility (The Repeat Sexual Predator Prevention Act of 2017)
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

These bills would have allowed prosecutors to introduce evidence of a defendant's relevant prior sex acts at a criminal trial. Under current Maryland law, the defense is legally entitled to introduce evidence regarding a victim's past sexual conduct but the prosecution is not afforded the same right. As a result, serial sex offenders continue to win over Maryland juries, securing their freedom while endangering public safety.

BILL NO: House Bill 428/Senate Bill 574
TITLE: Family Law - Child Conceived Without Consent - Termination of Parental Rights (Rape Survivor Family Protection Act)
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

This was the ninth year this legislation has been proposed to terminate the parental rights of a man who impregnates a woman by rape. While it made it through further in the process this year than ever before, it died at the 11th hour in an all-male conference committee on Sine Die. The WLC has long supported the Rape Survivor’s Family Protection Act, providing oral and written testimony, because it is a logical and compassionate step in providing support and protection to victims of sexual assault and their children. In addition, it helps to limit the re-victimization a woman may feel if she is forced into a legal relationship with her rapist after the birth of a child conceived as a result of the rape.

Civil and Human Rights

BILL NO: House Bill 1291/Senate Bill 856

TITLE: Maryland Legal Services Corporation Funding –
Abandoned Property Funds
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: PASSED

House Bill 1291/Senate Bill 856 will increase the amount of funding the Maryland Legal Services Corporation (MLSC) receives from abandoned property funds by \$500,000. The MLSC is a critical funding source for services that ensure access to justice for low income Marylanders, including many services offered by the WLC.

BILL NO: House Bill 172/Senate Bill 728
TITLE: Home Act of 2017
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 172/Senate Bill 728 would have amended Maryland’s Fair Housing law to prohibit discrimination by landlords and other property owners based on the source of the income the prospective renter will be using to pay for the housing, so that women relying on government subsidies or child support as a source of revenue would not be discriminated against in their search for affordable housing.

BILL NO: House Bill 502/Senate Bill 480
TITLE: Criminal Procedure – Post-Conviction Review – Conviction of Human
Trafficking Victim
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 502/Senate Bill 480 would have expanded the impact of Maryland’s “vacating convictions” law by explicitly including labor trafficking survivors, as well as increasing the type of convictions eligible for vacatur.

BILL NO: House Bill 540/Senate Bill 947
TITLE: Hate Crimes – Civil Remedies
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

House Bill 540/Senate Bill 947 would have provided individuals who have been the victim of a hate crime the right to sue their perpetrators.

BILL NO: House Bill 1362/Senate Bill 835
TITLE: Community Trust/ Law Enforcement and Governmental Trust Act
POSITION: SUPPORT
OUTCOME: FAILED

The Trust Act would have affirmed protections for undocumented immigrants, such as the victims of domestic violence served by our MEDOVI project, and prohibited the State from acting as an arm of federal immigration services. The bill would prevent local police officers from inquiring about a person's immigration status, and prevent local jails from holding someone on immigration violations unless federal agents present a valid court order. The purpose of the Trust Act was to rebuild trust between communities and local law enforcement agencies and to ensure that local resources and tax dollars are well spent. It would not alter the criminal legal system, but rather aimed to restore community trust in our law enforcement officials, improve public safety (by ensuring people can report crimes without the fear of deportation), and stop the expenditure of precious local dollars on federal enforcement efforts.