



Celebrating 50 Years of Advancing Justice

Listen. Engage. Advocate

Dear friend of the WLC,

With only one week left in the 2022 legislative session, time is running out for lawmakers to get their bills passed and sent to the Governor for signature. If a bill is presented to the Governor in the first 83 days of the session, the Governor has only 6 days (not including Sunday) to act before the bill automatically becomes law. Any bill presented in the last 7 days of the 90-day session or after adjournment must be acted on within 30 days of presentment. *Today* is the 83rd day of the session and as such, any bill that is expected to be vetoed by the Governor must be presented by today for the legislature to be able to override the veto this year.

With the legislature passing sweeping reform on [climate change](#), [cannabis use](#), and of course the [Abortion Care Access Act](#) and [Time to Care](#) (see more on this below), not to mention redistricting, there has been a strong push to get bills presented to the Governor in time for anticipated veto overrides. At the same time, there have been literally thousands of pieces of legislation introduced that, while perhaps not all making headlines, could potentially have a profound impact on citizens of the state. Focus will return to those bills after today and we will continue advocating for their passage before *sine die*.

In the meantime, there are multiple bills that need your support today!

CALLS TO ACTION

Read on to learn what bills need your immediate action. Then find the contact information at the end of this email to reach out and make your voice heard!

HOUSE JUDICIARY

The House has already passed [HB 153 – Criminal Law – Sexual Crimes – Repeal of Spousal Defense](#), and the House Judiciary Committee is now set to hear the Senate version of the bill which has been amended to [SB33 – Criminal Law – Sexual Crimes – Fourth Degree Sexual Offense and Spousal Defense](#) on April 7th. Currently, Maryland law allows *marriage* to be a defense to some sex crimes. This archaic law means that married people have less protection from sex crimes than unmarried people, and now Senate Amendments to SB33 have **switched this focus from married couples to ALL couples**.

We must let the House Judiciary Committee know: Your Relationship Status is Not Consent

Consent is an essential part of healthy relationships, and agreeing to something one time does not imply lasting agreement in the future. Getting into a relationship should not mean that you give up your right to control your own body. It's time to move Maryland out of the dark ages and firmly reject the notion that being in a relationship is an irrevocable and continual consent to offensive sexual touching.

Urge the Judiciary Committee to **REJECT the Senate's Amendments to SB33**.

SENATE JUDICIAL PROCEEDINGS

[HB 817](#) and [HB 639](#) were both passed out of the House and have had a hearing in the Senate. We need to urge the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee to vote favorably – and quickly – on these two bills so that the full Senate has a chance to vote.

[HB 817 - Criminal Law – Violation of a Protective Order – Merger Prohibition and Separate Sentence Authorization](#) This bill is a technical bill that seeks to address issues that arose from a recent Court of Special Appeals case and would ensure that a conviction for a serious crime that carries a higher possible sentence does not get merged into the relatively low sentence for a violation of

a protective order.

[HB 639 - Family Law - Grounds for Divorce](#) House Bill 639 would allow individuals who still live under the same roof to move forward with divorce proceedings under certain circumstances and reduce the period of required separation before they can file for divorce from 12 months to 6 months. For many people, financial hardships prevent them from physically separating until a divorce is finalized, but the law does not allow them to file until they have lived apart. This will simplify divorce law in Maryland and help people get out of harmful relationships without unnecessary barriers.

HOUSE ECONOMIC MATTERS

At the same time, [SB450](#) has passed out of the Senate and was just heard in the House Economic Matters Committee last week. The bill passed out of Committee last year but failed to get a vote on the House floor, so we need to urge Economic Matters to move the bill quickly so it gets a fair chance this year.

[SB 450 - Harassment and Sexual Harassment - Definitions - Employment Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training](#) This bill works to address the staggeringly difficult threshold known as the “severe and pervasive” standard that victims of workplace harassment must overcome in order to make a claim in court. It makes clear that there is a broad spectrum of harassment that must be taken seriously and that the lived experiences of victims must be the focus of evaluating these cases, not just the severity or frequency of the perpetrator’s acts. Women deserve a workplace that is free from harassment and they deserve to have legal recourse when it’s not.

GOVERNOR HOGAN

Finally, one of the most important pieces of legislation to have passed in recent years, the Time to Care Act sets us on a path to establish a paid family and medical leave program for workers in Maryland. After seven years of advocacy, SB 275 has passed out of the General Assembly and is on its way to Governor Hogan for consideration.

Click the link below to send a message to Governor Hogan today urging him to sign SB275 into law to ensure Marylanders have access to paid family and medical leave!

Contact Governor Hogan

House Judiciary Committee

Urge the Judiciary Committee to REJECT the Senate’s Amendments to [SB33 – Criminal Law – Sexual Crimes – Fourth Degree Sexual Offense and Spousal Defense](#).

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Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Urge JPR to vote in FAVOR of [HB 817 - Criminal Law – Violation of a Protective Order – Merger Prohibition and Separate Sentence Authorization](#)

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Ron Watson	ron.watson@senate.state.md.us	410-841-3631
Chris West	chris.west@senate.state.md.us	410-841-3648

House Economic Matters Committee

Urge ECM to vote FAVORABLY on [SB 450 - Harassment and Sexual Harassment - Definitions - Employment Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training](#)

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Courtney Watson	courtney.watson@house.state.md.us	410-841-3077

Onward,

The WLC Advocacy Team

P.S. As always, if you appreciate the work we do, whether in the General Assembly or through our [direct legal services across the State](#), [give here!](#) And if this email was forwarded to you by a friend, make sure to sign up for our legislative alerts [here!](#)

P.P.S. Save the Date for the WLC's 50th Anniversary Celebration and Awards Ceremony on May 19th, 6pm, at Live! Casino & Hotel! Join us in presenting the 50th Anniversary Legacy of Leadership Award to The Honorable Mary Ellen Barbera, Chief Judge (Ret.), Court of Appeals of Maryland; the 50th Anniversary Power of the Present Award to The Honorable Adrienne A. Jones, Speaker, The Maryland House of Delegates; and the 50th Anniversary Foundation of the Future Award, to Susan Francis, Executive Director, Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service. For more information or to buy tickets, click [HERE](#).

GIVE TODAY

Sponsorships and tickets now available for our 50th Anniversary Celebration & Awards Ceremony!

About The Women's Law Center of Maryland

The vision of the Women's Law Center of Maryland is a legal system that provides justice and fairness for women. The Women's Law Center's mission is to ensure the physical safety, economic security, and autonomy of women throughout the State. We work towards this goal by providing direct legal representation, information and referral services, and legislative advocacy.

Our efforts to promote justice, fairness, and equality for women are only possible because of friends like you.

[Give Today](#)

The Women's Law Center of Maryland, Inc. is a charitable organization designated as tax-exempt under Internal Revenue Code section 501(c)(3). A copy of our financial statement is available upon request. Documents and information submitted under the State of Maryland Charitable Solicitations Act are available from the Office of the Secretary of State of Maryland, Annapolis, MD 21401 for the cost of copying and postage.

