



Celebrating 50 Years of Advancing Justice

Listen. Engage. Advocate

Dear friend of the WLC,

After 13 long weeks of hard work, the 44th session of the Maryland General Assembly comes to a close tonight at midnight and adjourns *sine die*.

Regardless of what happens in these final hours, history has already been made this year. On Saturday the legislature overrode the Governor's vetoes of two of this session's most important pieces of legislation: The [Time to Care Act](#) and the [Abortion Care Access Act](#). Both bills are the result of tireless leadership from legislative champions and advocacy from a broad coalition of supporters. Once in effect, both bills will have a profound impact on the lives of Marylanders. As our [Executive Director, Michelle Siri, recently explained](#), these bills go to the heart of the WLC's mission: ensuring the physical safety, economic security, and bodily autonomy of women in Maryland. We are grateful for all the work and support of the sponsors and advocates like you who took the time to make calls, write emails, and send messages to get these bills over the finish line.

In the meantime, there are a number of bills that are still active and still have a chance to become law this year. But folks must let their elected representatives know what is important to them TODAY, before it's too late. Below are some of our priority bills that still need your support.

[HB 153 – Criminal Law – Sexual Crimes – Repeal of Spousal Defense](#) was passed by the House, while the Senate version of the bill has been amended to [SB33 – Criminal Law – Sexual Crimes – Fourth Degree Sexual Offense and Spousal Defense](#). As the two chambers have been [unable to concur on their amended versions of the bill, a conference committee has been appointed](#), with members of each committee appointed to reach a settlement. It is imperative that the original version of this bill be passed, and *not* the amended one. 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 stand firm: Your Relationship Status Does Not Equal Consent. The General Assembly must REJECT the Senate's Amendments.**

[HB833 - Criminal Law - Victims of Child Sex Trafficking - Safe Harbor and Service Response](#) This law should create a safe harbor for children who are victims of human trafficking, by taking them out of the justice system and providing them with the specialized services they so desperately need. Senate committee amendments have stripped much of those provisions out of this bill and we need to ask the full Senate to work with the House to restore those provisions. **Call [your senator](#) and ask them to protect, not prosecute, child victims of trafficking.**

[SB450 - Harassment and Sexual Harassment - Definitions - Employment Discrimination and Sexual Harassment Prevention Training](#)– This bill passed unanimously out of the Senate and the House Economic Matters Committee last year, only to die on sine die without a final House floor vote. It is currently in the same posture and we don't want to see it meet the same fate this year. **Ask [your delegate](#) to vote in favor of SB450 which will remove the overly burdensome "severe and pervasive" standard from our sexual harassment laws.**

[HB 639 - Family Law - Grounds for Divorce](#) was heard in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee two weeks ago, but still hasn't received a Committee vote. This is our last chance to update and greatly simplify our grounds for divorce in the state, by, among other things, creating a new ground for divorce: irreconcilable differences - a ground that 39 other states have already. **Ask the members of the [Judicial Proceedings Committee](#) to vote favorably on HB639 and to send it to the Senate for a full vote.**

[SB31 - Public Information Act – Inspection of Records From Body-Worn Digital Recording Devices](#) This bill would prevent abusers from obtaining copies of the body-worn digital recordings of law enforcement officers in certain circumstances, providing an important balance between victim safety and government transparency. **It has been voted out of the Senate but needs to be voted favorably in the [House Judiciary Committee](#) and then the House floor.**

[SB377 – Marriage Records – Name Change](#) - creates a statutory process for changing an individual's name on a marriage certificate. This is particularly relevant to transgender folks who wish to have accurate and affirming identity documents. It will allow them to do so with clarity and dignity, and without risk of being outed against their will. **SB377 was passed out of the Senate and currently needs the [House Judiciary Committee](#) to vote favorably and send it to the House floor for a vote.**

There are a lot of other bills that are still in play and the pace today will be frenetic to say the least. But no matter what happens at midnight there is much to celebrate this session and much to be grateful for. Thank you to each of you for caring about these issues and for doing your part to support our work in Annapolis. Because of you, we can continue to work towards our vision of fairness and justice for all women in Maryland.

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](#).

P.P.P.S. The "Prom" is back! The [Baltimore County Bar Association](#) is celebrating its centennial with their attorney-only [Annual Black Tie Banquet](#) event at Martin's Valley Mansion on May 18th at 6:30p.m.

P.P.P.P.S. Join our friends and colleagues at [Maryland Volunteer Lawyers Service](#) for their annual [A Taste for Pro Bono](#) on April 27, 2022 at 6pm at the Baltimore Museum of Industry.

P.P.P.P.P.S. Join reproductive rights advocates the very next night for [Planned Parenthood of Maryland's Spring Gala](#) at the American Visionary Art Museum on April 28th at 6:30pm.

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.

