



PROTECTING OUR OWN: OUR WORK TOWARD A VIOLENCE-FREE MARYLAND

Maryland: our treasures here are endless.

Yet, while we crack crabs, sip ‘Bohs, and rally for the Ravens, many in our state are suffering from unspoken, ignored, and unaddressed violence and exploitation.

Sexual assault, intimate partner violence, and human trafficking are happening all around us.

Of all adult women residing in Maryland, 19%, or about 457,000 adult women, have experienced some form of completed or attempted rape in their lifetime. Well over one million of Maryland’s women, and nearly a quarter of Maryland’s men, have experienced other forms of sexual violence. (1)

In 2020, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, which tracks and analyzes trends in intimate partner violence-related deaths each year, recorded a drastic increase in fatalities compared to previous years (the highest number since 2007 at 56 lives lost). The numbers for 2021 were worse: a staggering 58 Marylanders lost their lives due to intimate partner violence. The vast majority were women. (2)

This reality should alarm and galvanize us all into action. For too long, our collective response has been insufficient in combating these forms of abuse.

The implementation of the Safe Harbor law in 2023, which prevents the prosecution of minors for prostitution, marked a critical advancement for our state. However, the journey towards justice and protection for all survivors is far from over.

Our collaborative efforts with service providers, policymakers, and community advocates are designed to foster enduring societal transformation. We may be a progressive state in many ways—but in some ways, we still have a long way to go. We need your partnership to make Maryland safer.

If we do not speak out and take real legal action, the hidden suffering of many, including children, will persist, and the very essence of the civil Maryland we love will be at risk.

Amanda Rodriguez, Esq.
Executive Director

[1] Sexual Assault in Maryland Fact Sheet (2022), Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)
[2] 2021-2022 Annual Report of Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, “Maryland Domestic Violence Fatality Review State Implementation Team (MD-DVFRSIT), <https://www.mnadv.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/MD-DVFRSIT-2021-2022-First-Annual-Report-FINAL.pdf>
[3] Human Trafficking in Maryland Fact Sheet, Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force, <https://www.mdhumantrafficking.org/maryland>

Human Trafficking in Maryland

Maryland's central location and extensive transportation network have made it a hub for human trafficking. The I-95 corridor facilitates the movement of victims to and from major East Coast cities, making Maryland both a transit center and a destination state for traffickers. Through targeted policies and strategic partnerships, we aim to transform Maryland from a “goldmine” for traffickers into a stronghold of survivor support and trafficking prevention. (3)



2024 Legislative Agenda

Each year, TurnAround commits to a tailored set of legislative actions aimed at addressing the needs of the core populations we serve: survivors of trafficking, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence. Our focused efforts are designed to enhance protections, ignite systems-level change, hold our systems and leaders accountable, and broaden the resources available to these individuals as they rebuild their lives.

For Survivors of Trafficking

Our legislative agenda includes critical actions to safeguard those who have endured labor trafficking. One pivotal initiative is to mandate the reporting of labor trafficking of children, a measure that would ensure that such serious violations are promptly brought to the attention of Child Protective Services. This step is fundamental in triggering rapid intervention and offering immediate support to victims.

We are advocating for significant expansions in survivor assistance through the Regional Navigator Program. By encompassing both sex and labor trafficking victims, the Regional Navigator program will be able to offer a wider array of services — crucially including housing — which remains a gap in the current system. It is our steadfast goal that every policy and program TurnAround supports is anchored in the long-term health and well-being of survivors, providing a robust framework for their recovery and empowerment.

Addressing Sexual Violence

Our mission is to elevate levels of accountability and transparency in the investigation and prosecution of such cases. TurnAround is leading the charge, in concert with our partners and within the jurisdictions we serve, to forge statewide solutions that ensure justice and fair treatment for survivors. We are determined that the path to justice should be clear and unobstructed, reflecting our unwavering commitment to those we serve.

Of all adult women residing in Maryland, 19%, (457,000 women) have experienced some form of completed or attempted rape in their lifetime.

Well over one million of Maryland’s women, and nearly a quarter of Maryland’s men, have experienced other forms of sexual violence. (1)

[1] Sexual Assault in Maryland Fact Sheet (2022), Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA)
[2] 2021-2022 Annual Report of Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, "Maryland Domestic Violence Fatality Review State Implementation Team (MD-DVFRSIT)", <https://www.mnadv.org/wp-content/uploads/2023/02/MD-DVFRSIT-2021-2022-First-Annual-Report-FINAL.pdf>
[3] Human Trafficking in Maryland Fact Sheet, Maryland Human Trafficking Task Force, <https://www.mdhumantrafficking.org/maryland>

2024 Legislative Agenda, cont.

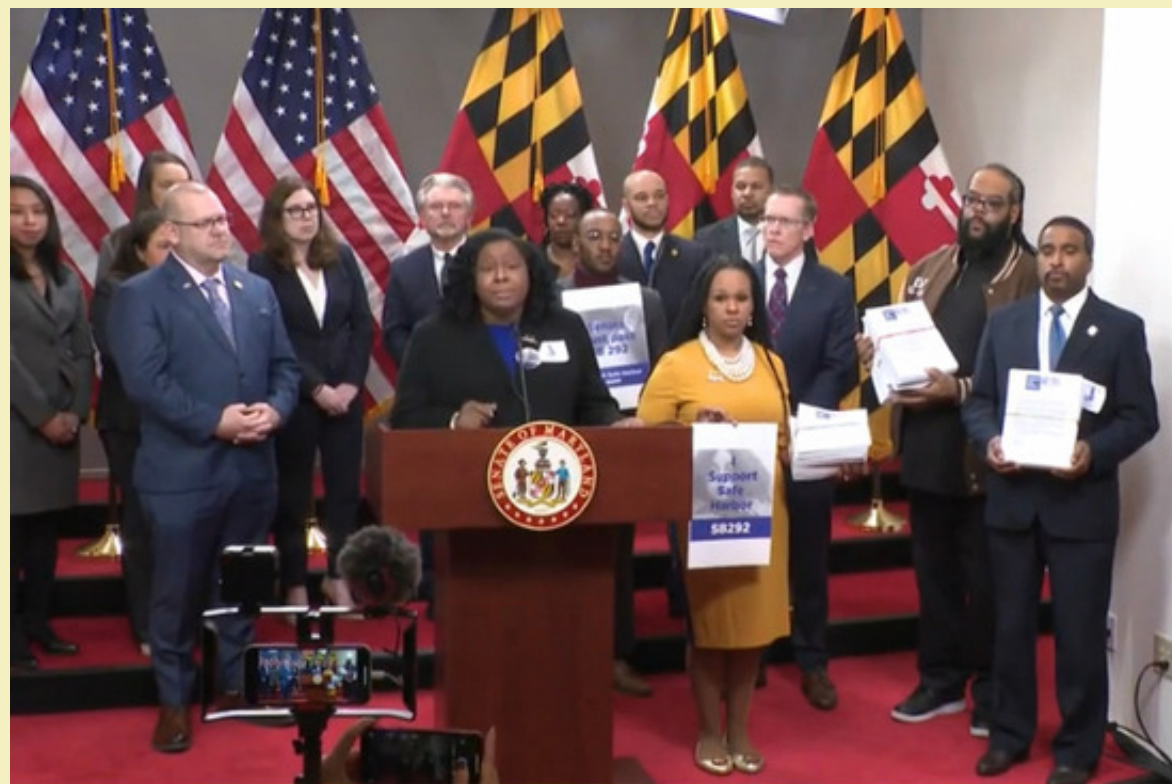
Combating Intimate Partner Violence

This year we are focused at the forefront of advancing protections against gun violence for survivors. A critical aspect of this protection is the notification system for survivors if their abusers attempt to purchase firearms. This not only serves as an early warning system but also as a preventative measure for potential harm.

Real Action For Survivors

A comprehensive overhaul of the Criminal Injury Compensation Board system is required. One example of a problematic policy: survivors are required to report their assault to access services funds, a mandate that can retraumatize and dissuade them from seeking help. Let's eliminate this requirement, streamline the funding process, and ensure easier access to survivor services without the necessity of police reporting. In parallel, we are striving to stabilize funding for comprehensive service providers, ensuring that those offering frontline support have the sustained resources they need.

These endeavors are more than legislative goals; they are our obligations to the well-being and dignity of survivors. TurnAround not only responds to immediate needs but also actively participates in shaping a society that supports, recognizes, and empowers those who have faced trafficking, sexual violence, and intimate partner violence.



Advocacy in Action: The Safe Harbor Law

The Beginnings of a Movement

Our involvement in advocating for Safe Harbor laws began in 2014, a time when this issue was emerging into the national consciousness. At that point, only a handful of states had enacted such laws, with New York facing significant struggles in its implementation.

The consensus among law enforcement and advocacy groups was growing: it was unjust to criminalize victims of trafficking. TurnAround was at the helm of this advocacy, actively participating in the task force addressing these legislative changes.

The Struggle For Change

Despite widespread agreement on the need for change, progress was slow. The entrenched viewpoint that penalizing trafficked children was somehow for their 'own good' posed a substantial barrier. This was vividly illustrated during legislative sessions in 2018 and 2019, where detractors voiced strong opposition.

One particularly striking instance involved a state attorney who, during a hearing, pointedly criticized Liz Kimbel—a survivor who was only 13 when trafficked—claiming that incarceration was a form of protection. Such sentiments, shockingly held even in recent years, underscore the systemic biases and misconceptions facing our advocacy.

Overcoming Resistance

Each legislative session that failed to pass the Safe Harbor law was a reminder of the challenges ahead. Liz Kimbel, and many like her, bravely continued to testify, reliving their trauma in the hopes of fostering change. The data underscores the systemic inequity of the laws in question—particularly affecting young Black women and girls—and illuminates the disproportionate impact on already marginalized populations.

“The five years I had the opportunity to work on the Safe Harbor bill was an honor and a privilege. I was able to voice my experiences of interactions with the justice system, the trauma caused, and the expectations I had for our great state of Maryland.

When the bill finally passed, I exhaled a breath I'd been holding for a long time, knowing other children who had already endured hell wouldn't have to look to the good guys for help, and in turn be criminalized for something no one would ever wish to happen to them or someone they love. Maryland's future is brighter, and that's the best win I could have asked for.”

—Liz Kimbel, Virtual & Outreach Director, The Restoring Ivy Collective



Advocacy in Action: The Safe Harbor Law cont.

The Fruits of Perseverance

The passage of the Safe Harbor law is more than a legislative victory; it represents the triumph of collective advocacy over resistance. It is a clear statement that these children are victims, not criminals, and that the societal beliefs which have long enabled their mistreatment will no longer stand. In supporting the work of partnership and coalition building, we have collectively contributed to a crucial piece of legislation that lays the groundwork for a more equitable and compassionate legal framework.

The Safe Harbor law serves as a powerful illustration of the change that can be achieved when survivors, advocates, and a unified community come together to challenge and transform the status quo. TurnAround remains committed to building upon this success, ensuring that the voices of survivors continue to be a driving force for legislative reform and social justice.

“In the heart of our community, the Maryland Safe Harbor Coalition ignited a flame of compassion, uniting concerned faith leaders, resilient community groups, and passionate residents. Together, we embarked on a transformative advocacy mission to champion the cause of Safe Harbor laws, shielding our precious youth from harm.

With unwavering determination, we formed an alliance, partnering with TurnAround to infuse our efforts with media presence and political insights. The collaboration amplified the voices of individuals across the state, resonating with a powerful message — Safe Harbor is not just a priority; it is a shared commitment etched in the hearts of Maryland's residents.

Through this harmonious collaboration, we elevated the urgency of Safe Harbor to the forefront of legislative agendas. Our collective voice, fortified by the stories, beliefs, and dreams of our community, became an undeniable force for change. The Coalition's journey is a testament to the extraordinary impact that arises when a community unites for a cause that transcends individual concerns – the protection and well-being of our youth.”

—Rev. Leslye Dwight, lead Maryland Safe Harbor Coalition advocate



Charting the Course of Change

At TurnAround, our vision is unwavering: to eradicate abuse and violence in all its forms. This objective transcends the routine day-to-day operations and aims for systemic, vision-level change. We are committed to creating a future where the ripple effects of our actions foster a safer, more just society in Maryland for years and generations to come.

A Maryland Free From Violence and Abuse

We engage not only in response to victimization but also proactively. By equipping individuals with the resources they need and aligning systems to provide robust support, we strive to prevent re-victimization.

Our advocacy for legislative change is a declaration that our community, our state, does not and will not tolerate the mistreatment of any person. Through the power of law, we progressively entrench these values into our institutions and pave the way for preventative measures and improved outcomes.



Charting the Course of Change, cont.

Educate, Advocate, Empower

At the core of every policy we champion is the survivor. Our commitment extends beyond meeting immediate needs; we are dedicated to walking alongside survivors on their journey to recovery, ensuring their long-term health and well-being. This survivor-centered approach is not just a part of our strategy; it is the compass that guides every step we take, guaranteeing that our initiatives have a tangible, positive impact on the lives of those we serve.

A Comprehensive Approach to Support

Our support system is comprehensive, encompassing immediate emergency response, ongoing treatment, and, critically, prevention. We endorse a strategy that is not content with merely treating the symptoms of abuse but is focused on preventing the harm before it happens. This end-to-end (E2E) approach is analogous to a lifeguard who works to prevent individuals from falling into dangerous waters, not just rescuing them once they are in peril.

Collaboration and Accountability Within the Community

The complexities of domestic violence, sexual abuse, and human trafficking cannot be tackled by a single entity. Recognizing this, TurnAround actively fosters collaboration with various organizations. This collaborative ecosystem enables a wider, more effective reach. Together, we can amplify our collective voice, hold each other accountable, and significantly boost our capacity for meaningful, lasting change.

Through these concerted efforts, we are setting the stage for a paradigm shift in how Maryland addresses and prevents abuse and violence.

Our resolve is to strengthen our engagement within the community further, ensuring that we not only respond to the immediate needs of survivors but also provide comprehensive protections into the future. It is imperative to us that the voices of survivors are not just heard but resonate in the halls where decisions are made, and that their needs are not just acknowledged but actively addressed.

**Join our movement by Following us on social media:
LinkedIn, Facebook, and Instagram.**

TurnAround, Inc. is a comprehensive domestic violence
and rape crisis center with offices in Baltimore City,
Baltimore County, and Howard County.

