

MARYLAND LEGISLATIVE AGENDA FOR WOMEN

SYNOPSIS OF LEGISLATIVE INITIATIVES

SEX CRIMES—DEFINITIONS

Sex Crimes Definition - this bill will amend criminal sex offense laws so the definition of "sexual act" includes penetration with a finger, fist, etc., and is treated with the same seriousness as penetration with an object. This amendment responds to victims' experiences of forcible penetration.

FAMILY RESPONSIBILITIES DISCRIMINATION

Employees continue to be discriminated against because of their family responsibilities. This more frequently impacts women since they are more likely to be caregivers to parents and children. This bill would prohibit employment discrimination against workers based on their responsibilities to care for family members.

HUMAN TRAFFICKING VICTIMS SUPPORT ACT

This bill would provide court ordered restitution for victims of human trafficking and would allow to be removed from the record prostitution convictions for anyone later found to have been a victim of human trafficking when the prostitution occurred.

EQUITY IN THE JUVENILE JUSTICE SYSTEM

This bill requires the Department of Juvenile Services to provide girls with a range and quality of services substantially equivalent to those offered for boys. Currently, girls are denied anything comparable to the continuum of services offered for boys.

LORRAINE SHEEHAN HEALTH AND COMMUNITY SERVICES ACT OF 2011

This bill will increase Maryland's alcohol tax by a dime a drink; raising \$214 million in new revenues. The money raised will fund critical health care and community services needs; including health care expansion, mental health, developmental disability and addiction prevention and treatment programs.

LIMITING EMPLOYER USE OF CREDIT REPORTS

This bill would restrict certain employers from performing credit checks on job applicants. 60% of employers report using credit checks as a tool in their pre-employment screening, even if the information has no relation to the job. Divorce, uncovered medical expenses, and job loss can all damage credit.

PUT HARRIET TUBMAN IN STATUARY HALL

This legislation authorizes replacement of Maryland's statue of John Hanson in the U.S. Capitol (each state has 2 statues) with a statue of Harriet Tubman, an icon in United States history. This would be the 10th statue of a woman and the first of an enslaved person in the collection.

FIRST DEGREE ASSAULT—STRANGULATION

This bill seeks an amendment to the first degree assault statute by adding the term strangulation as a specific prohibited act. Research indicates that strangulation is especially dangerous to victims of domestic violence and is frequently a precursor to homicide of domestic violence victims.

PERMANENCY HEARINGS FOR CHILDREN

This bill creates protocols for compliance with federal law requiring that children in out-of-home placement be consulted about their placement during annual permanency hearings in Maryland Courts.