Lawmakers pass bill to protect domestic violence victims

Posted by Joy Shrum-Reporter On 04/12/2017

Annapolis, MD - The Maryland General Assembly concluded its 437th session Monday. Before the session ended, the General Assembly passed legislation that would allow judges to order domestic violence defendants to wear GPS devices that would alert their victims if their abuser is in the area.

The bill is called “Amber’s Law” and it was named in memory of Amber Schinault. The Prince George’s County woman was killed by her ex-boyfriend in 2012. She had a protective order against Andrew Kugler, but he still broke into her home and murdered her. In 2014, Kugler was convicted and sentenced to life in prison.

With this bill, judges could order defendants to wear the GPS device as a condition of their release. The device would be in the form of an ankle bracelet. If the defendant is in an area that a court has ordered he or she to stay away from, like the victim’s home or work, the victim will get a smartphone app alert. Supporters of the bill call it a huge victory for domestic violence survivors.

Amber’s Law passed unanimously in the last moments of the 2017 legislative session. The bill now goes to Gov. Larry Hogan. He can sign it, veto it or let it become law without his signature.

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