



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 555 with Sponsor Amendments
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The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) is a non-profit membership organization that includes the State's seventeen rape crisis centers, law enforcement, mental health and health care providers, attorneys, educators, survivors of sexual violence and other concerned individuals. MCASA includes the Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI), a statewide legal services provider for survivors of sexual assault. MCASA represents the unified voice and combined energy of all of its members working to eliminate sexual violence. We urge the Judicial Proceedings Committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 555 with sponsor amendments.

Senate Bill 555

Communication with Survivors of Sexual Violence -- Required Meeting with Prosecutor

Sexual assault continues to be one of the most under-reported and under-prosecuted crimes. For every one-thousand sexual assault, an estimated nine are referred to prosecutors. See, <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>.

Attorneys at the Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) provide representation and counsel to over 400 sexual assault survivors annually, many of whom have questions about the criminal justice system and their options. A shocking number of clients tell us that they have reported the crime and heard nothing since. SB555 was prompted by the sponsor's constituent having this experience. It is unfortunate that legislation is needed to address what should be a standard practice and support for survivors.

There is no question that successful prosecution of sexual assault is difficult and prosecutors must make hard choices about when to pursue a case and when to dismiss one. However, the survivor should always be given respect and treated with recognition of the trauma involved. SB555 provides this by requiring a meeting and explanation when a State's Attorney Office chooses not to go forward with a case and the victim requests a meeting. Sponsor amendments are reasonable and largely technical.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judicial Proceedings Committee to
report favorably on Senate Bill 555 with Sponsor Amendments**