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**Working to end sexual violence in Maryland**

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**Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 581**  
**Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel**  
February 26, 2021

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 581.

**Senate Bill 581**

**Child's Name Change – No Publication**

Litigants who seek to change a person's name are currently required to publish a notice regarding the request for a name change. Rule 15-901(e)(2) requires:

“Publication. Unless the court on motion of the petitioner orders otherwise, the notice shall be published one time in a newspaper of general circulation in the county in which the action was pending at least fifteen days before the date specified in the notice for filing an objection to the petition. ...”

Courts are required to view motions for a waiver cautiously. 82 Op.Att’y Gen. 44 (1997). Name changes ordered in divorce or adoption actions do not require publication.

Senate Bill 581 requires courts to waive the publication requirement upon a motion.

MCASA's Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) has handled several cases where a name change for a minor child was requested because the child's name was the same as a parent who committed sexual assault. In at least one case, the child's name was the same as his father's with “Junior” at the end, and the father was convicted of sexual assault and on the sex offender registry. Senate Bill 581 would assist in these cases and protect the privacy of victims of crime and their children. Its crossfile, House Bill 39, has passed the House of Delegates.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges  
the Judicial Proceedings Committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 581**