



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting House Bill 165 with 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 Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee to report favorably on House Bill 165 with Amendments.

House Bill 165

Sexual Abuse & Assault Awareness and Prevention Program, Human and Sex Trafficking

This bill adds education about "human and sex trafficking" to the currently mandated curricula on awareness and prevention of sexual abuse and assault. The current mandate provides broad guidance at the state level, with additional community specific information developed locally. MCASA and many of its member rape crisis centers across the state have been involved in developing the current sexual abuse and assault prevention curricula; notably, this generally also includes information on consent.

Providing students with information regarding trafficking is an important component of prevention. Stopping the horrific crimes of trafficking must continue to be the responsibility of adults, not children, however education can help empower children and promote resilience. Including age-appropriate information regarding sex trafficking would fit well in current curricula regarding sexual abuse and assault and regarding consent. It is less clear whether labor trafficking would fit into this education and MCASA encourages the Committee to provide local schools flexibility on this point. Additionally, we express concern at limiting the trafficking education to students between 6th and 8th grade. These are smaller details, however, and MCASA fully supports HB165's larger goal of ensuring that students receive information about sex trafficking as part of their education. MCASA also notes that the bill requires that teachers providing this education have the training need to be effective, and notes that MCASA and other agencies are available to assist with efforts to train educators.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Education, Health & Environmental Affairs Committee
to report favorably on House Bill 165**