

**Testimony Supporting House Bill 758**  
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My name is Natalia Isabal and I am currently a junior studying criminology and criminal justice at the University of Maryland. I am a part of CARE to Stop Violence, an on campus entity designed to help survivors of intimate partner violence, where I serve as a Peer Advocate under the supervision of a licensed therapist.

More often than not, peer advocates have been the first to console survivors of rape. Through weekly advocacy appointments, we connect with clients to provide resources for reporting options, how to obtain a protective order, manage emotional responses, and even get medical care if needed.

This bill defining consent can help our clients seeking justice for the heinous crimes committed against them. Sex without consent is defined as rape - and should be written into law as such. With this phrasing, I can confirm that our tireless pursuit of justice can be achieved and the protections in place for our clients will become even more thorough.

When a legal definition focuses on the victim and whether they resist, the blame is placed upon them. House Bill 758 changes the focus to whether there is clear and voluntary agreement between the people involved. It clarifies that coercion is not consent, and neither is anything but a clear and voluntary agreement. CARE at the University of Maryland strongly urges the Judiciary Committee to report favorably (FAV) on House Bill 758. Thank you.