



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting House Bill 493
Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel
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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 Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 493.

House Bill 493 – Increased Access to Awards to Criminal Injuries Compensation Funds (CICF)

This bill would provide needed flexibility in the criminal injuries compensation fund process. Current law permits, but does not require, the Board to waive the requirement that a victim have reported a crime within 48 hours and have cooperated with police. HB493 *requires* the Board to waive these conditions *if* there is a finding of good cause. While victims of sexual assault already have these requirements waived, this should be consistent for any crime where there was good cause to delay reporting or cooperate with law enforcement. Victims of domestic violence, stalking, elder abuse, or other personal crimes can be reluctant to come forward, similar to the experiences of sexual assault survivors. MCASA also notes that many of the survivors who need compensation come from communities which are sometimes reluctant to work with law enforcement, including immigrants, communities of color, and women. Removing the Board's discretion to waive these conditions helps respond to this reality and improves access to the financial support the Criminal Injuries Compensation Funds provide.

(MCASA takes no position on provisions regarding property, noting that there is need for this and that the fiscal impact may be such that the Fund could not handle the costs.)

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judiciary Committee to
report favorably on House Bill 493**