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**Working to end sexual violence in Maryland**

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**Testimony Opposing House Bill 618**  
**Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel**  
February 17, 2022

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 in the State of Maryland. We urge the Ways & Means and Judiciary Committees to report unfavorably on House Bill 618.

**House Bill 618 – Depriving Children of Knowledge about Human Sexuality**

Human sexuality education empowers young people to make informed decisions about relationships and sexuality and navigate a world where gender-based violence, gender inequality, early and unintended pregnancies, HIV and other sexually transmitted infections (STIs) still pose serious risks to their health and well-being. Equally, a lack of high-quality, age- and developmentally-appropriate sexuality and relationship education may leave children and young people vulnerable to harmful sexual behaviors (including committing offense) and sexual exploitation.

House Bill 618 would permit children to be deprived of knowledge and information important to their health and well-being. This includes "SEX EDUCATION INSTRUCTION IN ACQUIRED IMMUNE DEFICIENCY SYNDROME EDUCATION OR ANY INSTRUCTION REGARDING SEXUALITY." Depriving children of this knowledge would increase risks to both the child and others around them.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the  
Ways & Means and Judiciary Committees  
to report unfavorably on House Bill 618**