



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Opposing House Bill 1100
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March 13, 2024

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 Health & Government Operations Committee to report unfavorably on House Bill 1100.

House Bill 1100 – Unnecessary Regulation of Child Advocacy Centers

Child advocacy centers (CACs) are “one-stop” shops that respond to sexually abused children. They help ensure that children are not retraumatized during the investigatory process. All jurisdictions in Maryland have CACs. Most are government based and others are in non-profits or have a hybrid model, often using referrals or agreements with other local programs to provide abused children with supportive services. MCASA fully supports CACs as a best practice in investigation of child sexual abuse.

House Bill 1100 requires child advocacy centers to report annually to the Behavioral Health Administration and authorizes the Secretary of Health to investigate certain complaints related to child advocacy centers. This is unnecessary and inappropriate regulation that will divert already scarce resources away from the children who need them.

Child advocacy centers are state of the art programs led by both national and state umbrella organizations. The National Children's Alliance provides accreditation standards and, in Maryland, 17 out of 24 CACs are accredited by the National Children's Alliance (“NCA”) with those remaining actively seeking accreditation. Within the state, the Maryland Children's Alliance provides programs with technical assistance and support. Additionally, the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention & Policy supports CACs with grant funding. These organizations provide significant oversight to the local programs, however, it is important to understand that there are a wide variety of local CAC models. By their nature, they are collaborations of professionals who work for different entities. The professionals, including mental health professionals addressed by HB1100, are subject to regulation related to their profession. If there is misconduct by a professional working with a CAC, the appropriate remedy is to complain to the relevant professional board. HB1100 is unnecessary and would waste precious resources.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Health & Government Operations Committee to report unfavorably on House Bill 1100**