



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

P.O. Box 8782  
Silver Spring, MD 20907  
Phone: 301-565-2277  
Fax: 301-565-3619

For more information contact:  
Lisae C. Jordan, Esquire  
443-995-5544  
www.mcasa.org

**Testimony Supporting House Bill 656**  
**Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel**  
February 15, 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 Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 656.

**House Bill 656 – Certification of Intimate Partner Violence Programs and Establishment of a Victims of Domestic Violence Grant Fund**

This bill would give the federally recognized state domestic violence coalition (the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence) formal responsibility for certifying comprehensive domestic violence programs, create a grant fund to segregate and protect funds to support these programs, and allow the Governor to allocate \$5 million to the Fund.

The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) is the federally recognized sexual assault coalition and has responsibility to certify the comprehensive rape crisis centers across the state. Criminal Procedure §11-923. As a result of their certification, these rape crisis centers are eligible for funding to support their important work helping sexual assault survivors in their communities. Certification is a common responsibility for state sexual assault coalitions across the United States and it works well. Coalitions share research, help develop statewide policy, and provide programs with a forum to learn from one another. Like other professions, such as lawyers and social workers, the coalition works with providers to develop standards to ensure high quality services for their clients. House Bill 656 would create parallel responsibilities for the federally recognized state domestic violence coalition.

House Bill 656 also establishes a Victims of Domestic Violence Grant Fund and provides that the Governor may include an annual appropriation of \$5 million. MCASA appreciates the difficult budget year and looks forward to helping our sister coalition advocate for mandatory funding in the future.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the  
Judiciary Committee to  
report favorably on House Bill 656**