



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 154 **Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel** March 26, 2025

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 Appropriations Committee and the Judiciary Committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 154

Senate Bill 154 – Continued Help to Protect Housing for Low Income Marylanders

Senate Bill 154 continues the Maryland Access to Counsel in Evictions Program (ACE) which provides free attorneys to tenants in eviction cases, preventing disruptive displacement, enhancing judicial efficiency and saving the state millions of dollars.

Housing is important for survivors of sexual violence and also to prevent sexual violence.

Experiencing homelessness is a risk factor for experiencing sexual assault (Breiding et al., 2017; Meinbresse et al., 2014). ... [S]afe, affordable, and stable housing can be a protective factor against experiencing sexual victimization (Hoedemaker, 2010).

MCASA's Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) is part of the community of Maryland Legal Services grantees. SALI helps support survivors and their housing needs through protective orders, use and possession of residences, and actions to terminate leases when it is unsafe to stay in a home or apartment. The ACE Program is a vital partner in this work, helping survivors who are safe at home, stay at home.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault and its
Sexual Assault Legal Institute
urges the Appropriations Committee and the Judiciary Committee to
report favorably on Senate Bill 154**