



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 491
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 which provides direct legal services for survivors across the State of Maryland. We urge the Health & Government Operations Committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 491.

Senate Bill 491 – Military Discharge and Sexual Trauma

This bill would define "honorable discharge" with respect to any State program of benefits, rights, or privileges applicable to a veteran to include certain discharges based on an experience of sexual trauma.

Research estimates there were 75,569 cases of sexual assault in the military in 2021 and 73,695 cases in 2023. On average, over the course of the war in Afghanistan, 24 percent of active-duty women and 1.9 percent of active-duty men experienced sexual assault.

<https://watson.brown.edu/costsofwar/papers/2024/sexualassault>

Senate Bill 491 helps ensure that members who leave services as a result of experiencing sexual trauma are treated with respect and continue to receive the benefits they have earned.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Health & Government Operations Committee to
report favorably on Senate Bill 491**