



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 233
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 (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 233.

House Bill 233 – Strangulation

HB233 clarifies that strangulation and suffocation are first degree assaults in Maryland.

Sex crimes law already treats strangulation and suffocation as aggravating factors, elevating the crime of rape from second degree rape to the more serious first degree rape. Crim.Law §3-303. Maryland's law on assault should be consistent and should clearly recognize that strangulation and suffocation serious and potential fatal acts.

Strangulation, when detected, is also a strong indicator of an overall and potentially deadly pattern of violence in an intimate relationship. The National Domestic Violence Hotline Notes that "If your partner has strangled you in the past, your risk of being killed by them is 10 times higher" and that strangulation is one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence. Unconsciousness may occur within seconds and death within minutes. (Last visited 1/26/2020: <https://www.thehotline.org/2016/03/15/the-dangers-of-strangulation/>)

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judiciary Committee to
report favorably on House Bill 233**