



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting House Bill 311
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 Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 311.

House Bill 311 - Court Dog and Child Witness Program

This bill establishes a statewide program to provide trained dogs in court to assist child victims. These gentle animals give affection and comfort to children who need emotional support during the course of their testimony and throughout the court process. Child victims of sexual abuse are some of our most vulnerable and emotionally fragile victims of crime. However, the crimes committed against them are most often committed in private and without other witnesses present, making their testimony crucial to the successful prosecution of sex offenders. The comfort and support of a trained therapy dog can make a profound difference for these survivors during a challenging time.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judiciary Committee to
report favorably on House Bill 311**