MCASA
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Opposing House Bill 1551
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 unfavorably on House Bill 1551.

House Bill 1551 – Health Care Provider Advice to Minor
This bill requires a health care provider to tell a child that the child may "report" to the health care provider that the child was abused. MCASA expresses concern that this bill will have unintended negative consequences. A better approach is to require training for providers about recognizing signs of abuse, support for reporting suspected cases, and continued creation of policies to help ensure mandatory reporters are trauma informed and sensitive in their communications. The requirement that the health care provider give information about reporting abuse to a child may also inadvertently interfere with investigations. Most health care providers are not trained in interviewing abused children. By contrast, when suspected abuse is reported, child advocacy centers use evidence based techniques to perform forensic interviewing. A health provider who suspects abuse should report abuse, not proceed with their own investigation.

The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judiciary Committee to
report unfavorably on House Bill 1551