



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Opposing House Bill 847
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The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) is a non-profit membership organization that includes the State's eighteen 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 in the State of Maryland. We urge the Judiciary Committee to report unfavorably on House Bill 847.

House Bill 847 – Sex Offenders – One-thousand Foot Bubble

House Bills 847 would prevent sex offenders from residing within a 1000 foot “bubble” around schools, child care facilities, parks, playgrounds, designated school bus stops, or places where children regularly congregate. This is without question a well-meaning law that resonates with many of our instincts to simply keep sex offenders away from children. Unfortunately, the experience of other states has been that this type of law has unintended consequences and decreases, rather than increases, our ability to monitor offenders.

The State of Iowa enacted similar residency restrictions. Their prosecutors found this law had significant unintended consequences, including:

- leading offenders to drop out of sight and fail to register
- making offenders more reluctant to enter into plea agreements, which leads to fewer convictions and more cases where children are placed on the stand
- increasing pleas to “non-sex” charges, which results in offenders who are not monitored or treated under sex offender monitoring & supervision programs

MCASA appreciates Maryland's efforts to keep children safe, however, we believe that the policy proposed by HB847 would have unintended and harmful consequences.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judiciary Committee to report unfavorably on House Bill 847**