



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Opposing House Bill 1167
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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. MCASA urges the Health & Government Operations Committee to issue an unfavorable report on House Bill 1167.

House Bill 1167 – Coercion and Reproductive Choice
Survivors of Reproductive Coercion Need Access to Abortion Care

Reproductive coercion is a form of intimate partner violence where a woman's partner tries to control reproductive decisions by preventing access to or tampering with birth control, or forcing sexual intercourse with the intent of causing pregnancy. Of women who were raped by an intimate partner, 30% experienced a form of reproductive coercion by the same partner. Specifically, about 20% reported that their partner had tried to get them pregnant when they did not want to or tried to stop them from using birth control. About 23% reported their partner refused to use a condom.

<https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/understanding-RRP-inUS.html>

These survivors need access to abortion care if they become pregnant and choose not to continue the pregnancy. Forcing a woman to have a child ties the woman to the abuser.

The "Whereas" clauses of House Bill 1167, ironically couched in terms of freedom of choice for women (see p. 2, lines 4-6), make it starkly plain this is simply an anti-abortion bill dressed up in the guise of seeking to assist vulnerable women.

A much better policy would be to strengthen our criminal laws on assault and sexual violence, and increase prosecution under existing laws. In addition, funding more services for victims would offer the greatest chance for victims to live free of their abusers.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Health & Government Operations Committee to
report unfavorably on House Bill 1167**