



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting Senate Bills 558 and 556 with Amendments
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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 Judicial Proceedings Committee to issue favorable reports on Senate Bills 558 and 556 with Amendments.

Senate Bill 558 and 556 – Body Worn Cameras – Expansion and Training

SB558 and SB556 address many aspects of the use of body-worn cameras by law enforcement including contracts for equipment, storage of footage, and costs of equipment. The bill also specifies that the Maryland Police Training and Standards Commission must develop and publish online a policy for the disclosure of body-worn camera recordings to the public. The policy shall consider several factors including individual privacy.

MCASA supports the bill with an **amendment that prohibits the release of body-worn camera footage depicting a victim or information that could identify a victim of sexual assault, child abuse, domestic violence, or elder abuse**. This amendment achieves an important balance between policy transparency, police accountability, and victim privacy. The amendment should also **require victim consent prior to any release of a body-worn camera footage to a third party outside the scope of a criminal or civil legal proceeding and notice of all requests for the video footage**. Senate Bill 31 contains strong provisions addressing these issues and could provide the source for these amendments or reported favorably on its own.

MCASA supports the use of body-worn cameras. In a 2015 survey, 88% of victims of sexual assault or domestic violence reported that police “sometimes” or “often” do not believe victims or blamed victims for the violence.¹ In that same survey, 83% of those surveyed thought police “sometimes” or “often” do not take allegations of sexual assault and domestic violence seriously. Over 80% believed that police-community relations with marginalized communities influenced survivors’ willingness to call the police. The accountability and transparency created

¹ https://www.aclu.org/sites/default/files/field_document/2015.10.20_report_-_responses_from_the_field_0.pdf

by the use of body-worn cameras by law enforcement is an important part of increasing trust and confidence in law enforcement.

For victims of sexual assault to develop more trust and confidence in law enforcement it is critical for them to know that the body-worn camera recordings will not simply be released to the perpetrator or the public and that strong enforceable provisions be included in our laws.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judicial Proceedings Committee to
report favorably on Senate Bill 558 and Senate Bill 556 with Amendments**

