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**Working to end sexual violence in Maryland**

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**Testimony Supporting House Bill 887**  
**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 favorably on House Bill 887.

**House Bill 887 – Protective Orders - Status Hearings**

House Bill 887 would permit persons eligible for relief who have been awarded a protective order to seek a status hearing. Courts would be required to promptly schedule a status review hearing. Hearings would provide an opportunity to determine whether additional intervention is necessary to protect the persons eligible for relief.

Protective orders are available in response to many sexual assaults. Sex crimes are themselves a type of abuse that can provide the basis for an order. Additionally, the definition of a "person eligible for relief" includes a petitioner who has been a victim of a sex crime or attempted sex crime within 6 months prior to the filing of the petition. Protective orders help survivors establish safety and may include a wide variety of provisions to respond to an individual's circumstances. These orders can be enforced through civil contempt and some provisions are enforceable through criminal sanctions for violations.

This bill helps expand access to a practice regularly employed by many courts: status hearings. Many judges set these hearings to check on the parties and determine whether the order is being complied with or needs modification. HB887 will formalize this process and empower survivors to ask the court to hold status hearings. This is particularly helpful for survivors who prefer not to use the criminal justice system. Status hearings also have a preventative benefit, stopping violations and non-compliance before they escalate to further abuse. These hearings can be especially helpful when orders have been tailored to address visitation or to ensure that coworkers do not encounter one another. For example, one case involved two people who both worked at the same work location. The protective order specified when each could be at the workplace. A status hearing helped identify that the employer had rescheduled the petitioner's work hours and modification was needed to continue to keep the abuser away from her, yet still keep his job as both parties desired. This relatively minor adjustment helped ensure the survivor continued to have protection from further violence.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges  
the Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 887**