



**Working to end sexual violence in Maryland**

P.O. Box 8782  
Silver Spring, MD 20907  
Phone: 301-565-2277  
Fax: 301-565-3619

For more information contact:  
Lisae C. Jordan, Esquire  
443-995-5544  
www.mcasa.org

**Testimony Supporting House Bill 294 with Amendments**

**Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel**

February 10, 2022

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 294 with Amendments

**House Bill 294 – Juvenile Justice Reform - Jurisdiction**

The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault fully supports efforts to reform Maryland's juvenile justice system. We note that minors who are Black, Brown, poor, immigrant, or disadvantaged are disproportionately represented in the juvenile justice system and believe that juvenile justice reform is a critical piece of addressing this injustice. We also note that victims of criminal acts – including those committed by juveniles -- are often members of these same communities. Reform efforts should also address their perspective. House Bill 294 would move *all* cases involving allegations against minors to juvenile court, including cases involving the most extreme types of sexual violence such as gang rape, rapes involving kidnapping, sexual assaults involving disfigurement, and even sexual assaults involving murder. We respectfully suggest that cases involving committing extreme violence should start in the adult system. Adult cases are more open and transparent and starting cases there provides victims and their communities with more support and access to the justice system. Additionally, the State should have the option to retain jurisdiction over some violent juvenile offenders beyond their 21<sup>st</sup> birthday and should develop a more nuanced response to young people who commit violent crimes.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the  
Judiciary Committee to  
report favorably on House Bill 294 with Amendments**