



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 786 **Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel** March 1, 2023

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 Finance Committee to issue a favorable report on Senate Bill 786.

Senate Bill 786 - Protecting Reproductive Decision-making by Protecting Health Care Records

This bill provides extra layers of protection for reproductive health information in electronic health record systems, often called health information exchanges. The legislation also ensures that Maryland's state government protects personal information of patients and providers that may be stored in state databases. Reproductive freedom in Maryland depends on making sure we do not expose the personal information of our providers and patients.

Access to abortion care and information about reproductive options are vital to survivors of rape.

The CDC reports that almost 3 million women in the U.S. experienced Rape-Related Pregnancy (RRP) during their lifetime. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/sexualviolence/understanding-RRP-inUS.html>

A three year longitudinal study of rape-related pregnancy in the U.S., published in the American Journal of Obstetrics and Gynecology (1996, vol. 175, pp. 320-325), found:

5% of rape victims of reproductive age (age 12-45) became pregnant as a result of rape, with the majority of pregnancies in adolescents. Of these, half terminated the pregnancy, 5.9% placed the child for adoption, and 32.2% kept the child.

These survivors need to be able to speak with their health care providers without risking civil or criminal prosecution.

Survivors of Reproductive Coercion Need Access to Abortion Care without Fear of Prosecution

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 to be able to speak with their health care providers without risking civil or criminal prosecution.

Sharing reproductive health information only benefits patients and providers if it does not also put them at risk for civil litigation or criminal charges. SB786 will put the proper safeguards in place to prevent the exploitation of information and keep patients and providers focused on care.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Finance Committee to
report favorably on Senate Bill 786**

