



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 949 with Amendments
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March 21, 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. We urge the Judicial Proceedings Committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 949 with amendments.

Senate Bill 949 -- Forensic Exams – Non-Fatal Strangulation

This bill adds non-fatal strangulation to the statute authorizing and requiring reimbursement for medical forensic exams involving rape, sexual offenses, and child sexual abuse. The evidence collected through these exams is crucial for the prosecution of these very serious crimes.

Nationally, there are extensive protocols for forensic exams specific to non-fatal strangulation.

<https://www.forensicnurses.org/page/STAssessment> MCASA fully supports expanding support for forensic exams to include non-fatal strangulation, both because this will increase detection of strangulation in sexual assault cases, and also to assist victims of strangulation unrelated to sexual violence.

The act of strangulation can be horrifying for victims and cause serious injury, negative future health consequences, or death. A common occurrence in intimate partner violence, studies show that strangulation co-occurs with sexual violence in 5 to 25% of cases but the act often goes undetected in sexual assault victims.

https://www.pcar.org/sites/default/files/resourcepdfs/strangulation_and_sexual_violence_factsheet.pdf

MCASA's suggestions for amendments to SB949 are operational and unrelated to the underlying policy. Significant federal funding is specific to sexual assault forensic exams; other funding is directed towards survivors of intimate partner violence. MCASA suggests working with agency staff administering criminal injuries compensation to ensure that Maryland is leveraging federal funding and to ensure that the important policy embodied in SB949 can be effectively implemented.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judicial Proceedings Committee to
report favorably on Senate Bill 949 with Amendments**