

Testimony Supporting House Bill 412

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I am submitting this testimony as a lifelong Maryland resident, researcher, educator, and student dedicated to ending sexual violence. House Bill 412 would change Maryland's rape law to focus on whether there is a clear and voluntary agreement between the people involved.

The proposed legislation would represent a significant change in Maryland's approach to sexual crimes, specifically by removing the requirement of force or threat of force for second-degree rape and outlining specific factors to consider when determining the presence of consent.

This shift is in line with a growing understanding that sexual violence can take many forms, including those that do not involve physical force, and that consent is essential for any sexual encounter. By removing the requirement of force or threat of force, the legislation would expand the definition of rape to include situations where someone may have been coerced or manipulated into a sexual act.

Additionally, by providing specific factors to consider when determining consent, the legislation would help clarify the legal standard for sexual encounters, making it easier to determine when a crime has occurred. This standard would help ensure that all parties involved in a sexual encounter have a clear understanding of what constitutes consent and that any violation of that consent is taken seriously.

Overall, this proposed legislation could represent an important step forward in addressing sexual violence in Maryland by expanding the definition of rape and clarifying the legal standard for consent.

I urge the Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 412.