



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting House Bill 603
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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 Economic Matters Committee to report favorably on House Bill 603.

House Bill 603 – Kids Code – Helping to Prevent Sexual Exploitation

House Bill 603 would require a business that offers an online product likely to be accessed by children to complete a certain data protection impact assessment, prohibit a business from offering a certain online product before completing a data protection impact assessment, require businesses to document certain risks associated with certain online products, require certain privacy protections for certain online products, and prohibit certain data collection and sharing practices.

The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault defers to other witnesses regarding the technological aspect of this bill. We are not experts in technology, but we are experts on preventing and responding to on-line sexual exploitation, predation, and harassment of children. This is an enormous problem for our state and our children, and the threat is growing. The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children's CyberTipline offers the public and online electronic service providers an easy way to quickly report suspected incidents of sexual exploitation of children online. Since 2012, they have seen an **8000% (eight-thousand) increase** in tips to this cyberline. This includes:

- over 80,000 reported incidents of online enticement of children for sexual acts;
- over 35,600 reported incidents of unsolicited obscene materials sent to a child;
- almost 32 million reported incidents of child pornography

At a hearing to punish criminals who solicit children to send them images of their intimate body parts, the Maryland State's Attorneys' Association reported on some of our experiences in Maryland:

It is a most common practice for the online predator to encourage the purported youth to manufacture CSAM (Child Sexual Abuse Material) and send it to the predator. Conversely, the predator frequently sends pictures of his own genitalia to the purported minor. It is a common part of the grooming process as ultimately the predator wishes to engage in actual sexual conduct with a minor.

The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children explains that there is an increase in children being victimized by "financial sextortion, a crime in which kids are targeted to share explicit photos and then threatened by offenders that they will share the images with the child's friends, family, or others if they don't give the blackmailer money. Several of these cases have had tragic outcomes with panicked children taking their own lives." Maryland Criminal Law §3-709 creates criminal penalties to punish the offenders engaging in these heinous acts, but HB603 would help prevent them.

MCASA strongly supports House Bill 603 because the Kids Code will help *prevent* crimes and *protect* our kids against sexual predators and sexual exploitation.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Economic Matters Committee to
report favorably on House Bill 603**