



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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**Testimony Supporting House Bill 693**  
**Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel**  
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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 Environment & Transportation and Judiciary Committees to report favorably on House Bill 693.

**House Bill 693 – Renters Rights and Stabilization Act – Help for Sexual Assault Survivors**  
This bill provides a range of support for housing.

There is increasing recognition of the importance of housing for survivors of sexual violence. The National Sexual Violence Resource Center explains: For some survivors, home may not be a safe place and they may need to leave due to sexual violence happening in their home being perpetrated by household members, landlords, or neighbors. For others, they may need to find safe alternative housing to heal from and lessen the effects of trauma they have experienced, especially if the sexual assault occurred in their home, or if the person who perpetrated the sexual assault knows where they live. Additionally, many people experiencing homelessness have experienced sexual assault prior to becoming homeless (Slesnick et al., 2018). Experiencing homelessness is also a risk factor for experiencing sexual assault (Breiding et al., 2017; Meinbresse et al., 2014). ... [S]afe, affordable, and stable housing can be a protective factor against experiencing sexual victimization (Hoedemaker, 2010).

HB693 increases *the surcharge* in summary ejection, tenant hold over, and certain breach of lease matters from \$8 to \$93 per case. The current total amount for filing an eviction is just \$15, the lowest in the nation, and far lower than the national average of \$109. Increasing the total filing fee amount to \$100 would deter landlords from using our overburdened court system as a collection agency and ultimately decrease the number of frivolous eviction filings in our state. HB693 would distribute funds raised from this increased surcharge equally between a statewide Rental Assistance Voucher Program and the legislatively created Maryland Legal Services Corporation Fund.

MCASA's Sexual Assault Legal Institute (SALI) is part of the community of Maryland Legal Services grantees. SALI helps support survivors and their housing needs through protective orders, use and possession of residences, and actions to terminate leases when it is unsafe to stay in a home or apartment. Legal services are an important part of efforts to keep survivors safe and we appreciate HB693 and its support for the Maryland Legal Services Corporation.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the  
Environment & Transportation and Judiciary Committees to report favorably on House Bill 693**