



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 481
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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 Judicial Proceedings Committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 481.

Senate Bill 481 – 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).

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 SB481 and its support for the Maryland Legal Services Corporation.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judicial Proceedings Committee to
report favorably on Senate Bill 481**