



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting House Bill 558
Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel
February 7, 2024

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 in the State of Maryland. We urge the Ways and Means Committee to report favorably on House Bill 558.

House Bill 558 – K-12 Comprehensive Health Education

This bill will mandate a comprehensive health education for students in K-12. MCASA notes and appreciates that this specifically includes issues vital to preventing sexual assault and promoting health relationships, including:

- (IV) FAMILY LIFE AND HUMAN SEXUALITY**
- (V) GENDER IDENTITY AND SEXUAL ORIENTATION**
- (VI) SAFETY AND VIOLENCE PREVENTION**

This bill is particularly strong because it approaches health education holistically and will permit educators to develop curricula that respond to the needs of students. By including the broad spectrum of topics, the Comprehensive Education Framework will help create a cohesive and sensical approach to related topics such as sexuality, consent, and abuse prevention. Past legislatures have considered specific mandates to address sexting, misuse of technology, and risks from human trafficking. MCASA notes that the Committee may wish to consider whether these topics are included in what is proposed or should be specifically mentioned.

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urges the Ways and Means Committee to
report favorably on House Bill 558**