



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Opposing House Bill 1480
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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 unfavorably on House Bill 1480.

House Bill 1480 – Unnecessary Regulation of Child Advocacy Centers

Child advocacy centers (CACs) are "one-stop" shops that respond to sexually abused children. They help ensure that children are not retraumatized during the investigatory process. All jurisdictions in Maryland have CACs. Most are government based and others are in non-profits or have a hybrid model, often using referrals or agreements with other local programs to provide abused children with supportive services. MCASA fully supports CACs as a best practice in investigation of child sexual abuse.

Child advocacy centers are state of the art programs led by both national and state umbrella organizations. The National Children's Alliance provides accreditation standards and, in Maryland, the Maryland Children's Alliance provides further oversight and public education. These organizations provide significant oversight to the local programs, however, it is important to understand that there are a wide variety of local CAC models. By their nature, they are collaborations of professionals who work for different entities. The professionals, including mental health professionals addressed by HB1480, are subject to regulation related to their profession. If there is misconduct by a professional working with a CAC, the appropriate remedy is to complain to the relevant professional board. HB1480 as amended also requires the Governor's Office of Crime Prevention and Policy to post information, unnecessarily duplicating the responsibilities of the National and Maryland's Children's Alliance, and the Attorney General's Office to conduct investigations, intruding into issues best left to professional boards and licensure. HB1480 is unnecessary and does not help survivors or those who work with survivors.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judicial Proceedings Committee to report unfavorably on House Bill 1480**