



Bill No: SB549  
Title: Civil Actions - Immunity - Disclosure of Allegations of Sexually Assaultive Behavior (Stop Silencing Survivors Act)  
Committee: Judicial Proceedings  
Hearing: February 6, 2025  
Position: FAVORABLE

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The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW) is a statewide coalition of women's groups and individuals formed to provide a non-partisan, independent voice for Maryland women and families. MLAW's purpose is to advocate for legislation affecting women and families. To accomplish this goal, MLAW creates an annual legislative agenda with issues voted on by MLAW members and endorsed by organizations and individuals from all over Maryland. **SB549 - Civil Actions - Immunity - Disclosure of Allegations of Sexually Assaultive Behavior (Stop Silencing Survivors Act)** is a priority on the [2025 MLAW Agenda](#) and we urge your support.

[SB549](#) would provide protection from retaliatory litigation for survivors who disclose sexual assault in good faith, while preserving the right to sue for intentional or reckless disclosure of false information or malicious allegations of assault. It is fair and it is needed for survivors, the majority of whom are women. If passed, it would provide sexual assault survivors with the same protections that are currently given to employers providing employment references. It provides a practical and effective way to discourage sex offenders from using the courts to silence survivors.

Sexual assault continues to be one of the most under-reported and under-prosecuted crimes in America. In Maryland and across the country, rapists are using retaliatory lawsuits to silence those who speak out about sexual violence. Survivors are being subjected to expensive, retraumatizing, and drawn-out litigation, and some are discouraged from ever speaking out.

Of all adult women residing in Maryland, 19%, or about 457,000 adult women, have experienced some form of completed or attempted rape in their lifetime. About 44%, or 1,058,000 of Maryland's women, and more than 23% of Maryland's men, about 520,800, have experienced other forms of sexual violence. (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Crime Victimization Survey, 1992-2015)

Nearly 1 out of every 5 American women, 18 years or older, has been the victim of at least one attempted or completed rape in her lifetime. (National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2015 Data Brief.) This bill will help empower survivors who choose to disclose sexual assault and will help make our communities safer by making it more likely that sex offenders will be identified and held accountable.

**For these reasons, MLAW strongly urges the passage of SB549.**

## MLAW 2025 Supporting Organizations

The following organizations have signed on in support of our 2025 Legislative Agenda:

1199 SEIU United Healthcare Workers East  
AAUW Anne Arundel County  
AAUW Garrett Branch  
AAUW Howard County  
AAUW Kensington-Rockville Branch  
AAUW Maryland  
Anne Arundel County NOW  
Bound for Better, advocates for Domestic Violence  
Calvert County Democratic Womens' Club  
Charles County Commission for Womrn  
Child Justice, Inc.  
City of College Park MD  
Court Watch Montgomery  
Delta Sigma Theta Sorority North Arundel County Alumnae Chapter  
FinnCORE, Inc.  
Frederick County Commission for Women  
Interfaith Action for Human Rights  
Kids for Saving Earth  
Maryland Chapter, National Organization for Women  
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault  
Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence  
Montgomery County, MD, NOW  
National Coalition of 100 Black Women, Inc., Anne Arundel County Chapter  
NCBWSOMD  
ShareBaby, Inc.  
Stella's Girls Incorporated  
SUB&S LLC  
The Rebuild, Overcome, and Rise (ROAR) Center of UMB  
Trans Maryland  
Unrooted Culture  
Women of Honor International  
Women's Equality Day Celebration across Maryland Coalition  
Women's Equity Center and Action Network (WE CAN)  
Women's Law Center of Maryland

\*signed on as of 1/26/2025

### **Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women**

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