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WOMEN LEGISLATORS OF MARYLAND
THE MARYLAND GENERAL ASSEMBLY

February 7, 2025

To: Delegate Luke Clippinger, Chair
Delegate J. Sandy Bartlett, Vice Chair
Judiciary Committee

The Maryland Women's Caucus is proud to express our **unanimous support** for **HB613 – Criminal Procedure - Protection of Identity of Victim of Sexual Assault**. This critical legislation is a necessary and overdue measure to protect the privacy and safety of survivors of sexual assault by **automatically redacting their identifying information from public-facing documents and kiosks**.

Currently, anyone can access the **Maryland Electronic Courts (MDEC) system** or public-facing kiosks and easily retrieve **the names and identifying details of sexual assault victims**. This lack of protection not only exposes survivors to further trauma but also **places them at risk of harassment, retaliation, and re-victimization**. The Maryland Women's Caucus finds this reality unacceptable and stands firmly in support of HB613 as a **vital step toward shielding survivors and ensuring they are not further harmed by systemic shortcomings**.

Sexual violence is an **epidemic that disproportionately affects women**. Statistics show that **1 in 5 women** have experienced **completed or attempted rape**, and **81% of women** have endured **some form of sexual assault or harassment** in their lifetime. Survivors already face immense barriers in seeking justice, and the public accessibility of their private information only exacerbates these challenges. We must ensure that **Maryland does not contribute to the re-traumatization of survivors** by allowing their names and identities to be easily accessed.

HB613 provides a **simple yet powerful solution**: ensuring that the names of **sexual assault survivors are automatically redacted** from public court records, just as other states have done to protect victims of violent crimes. Survivors should not have to **petition the courts to shield their own identities**—this protection should be granted as a matter of principle and policy.

For these reasons, the Maryland Women's Caucus **strongly urges** the committee to issue a **favorable report** for HB613. This bill is not just about privacy—it is about **dignity, safety, and justice for survivors of sexual assault**. We have a responsibility to ensure that Maryland leads the way in survivor-centered policies, and HB613 is a critical step in fulfilling that obligation.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We appreciate your continued dedication to the safety and well-being of Maryland's women and children.