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## Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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### **Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 873 with Amendments** **Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel** March 25, 2025

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 either a favorable report with amendments or an unfavorable report on Senate Bill 873.

#### **Senate Bill 873 – Third Degree Assault**

As introduced this bill would create the crime of 3<sup>rd</sup> assault and a definition of “offensive contact.” The Senate chose to amend this bill and create a work group to study the issue.

MCASA agrees that this issue presents a number of nuances that should be discussed. We very much appreciate the efforts in the original bill to address concerns regarding survivors of sexual assault, domestic violence, and domestically related crimes. We also appreciate that the amended bill includes a seat for one representative of a group supporting victims of domestic violence, appointed by the Governor. However, we ask that this be changed to include representation of the state domestic coalition, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, and also that the state sexual assault coalition, the Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault, be specifically included as follows:

On page 10, line 15 strike “;and”

On page 10, in line 16, following (9), strike “one representative of a group supporting victims of domestic violence, appointed by the Governor” and substitute

**“THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MARYLAND NETWORK AGAINST DOMESTIC VIOLENCE OR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S DESIGNEE; AND**

**(10) THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR OF THE MARYLAND COALTON AGAINST SEXUAL ASSAULT OR THE EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR’S DESIGNEE”**

Alternatively, MCASA notes that last session the General Assembly created a Task Force to Study Crime Reclassification and Penalties (SB379 - 2024) and it may be more appropriate to include this issue in the responsibilities of that Task Force instead of creating an independent work group.