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**Working to end sexual violence in Maryland**

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**Testimony Supporting House Bill 434**  
**Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel**  
February 12, 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 the Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 434.

**House Bill 434 -- SLAPP Suits**

This bill clarifies and supports the exercise of constitutional rights to petition and exercise free speech by amending the law regarding SLAPP Suits – Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. Sexual assault survivors across the country are increasingly facing lawsuits brought to discourage exercising their rights in college sexual misconduct proceedings and related Title IX actions. Some survivors encouraged to speak out about sexual violence by the #MeToo movement have also been met with lawsuits designed to silence them. House Bill 629 specifically addresses these lawsuits, however HB43 is another tool to help discourage litigation abuse.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the  
Judiciary Committee to  
report favorably on House Bill 434**