



BAILEY DUQUETTE P.C.

February 10, 2025

**Re: Immunity for Survivors and Others Disclosing Sexual Assault in Good Faith
Expert Testimony in Support of Maryland House Bill 629**

To Whom It May Concern:

I am a nationally recognized civil and victim rights attorney barred in the State of Maryland. My career has specialized in holding perpetrators and enablers of sexual violence accountable, especially in educational settings. I am also a graduate of the University of Maryland Carey School of Law where I taught a seminar entitled: "Sexual Violence and Harassment within Educational Settings."

In addition to being a legal practitioner and educator, I have served as an expert witness and consultant on campus sexual assault cases nationwide over a dozen times. Finally, but perhaps most importantly, I am also an outspoken survivor, so I know the courage it takes to speak out and the risks in doing so.

From these informed perspectives, I write today to unequivocally support Maryland House Bill 629, which would grant immunity to survivors and others who disclose sexual assault in good faith.

Throughout my career, I have defended survivors, witnesses, and their loved ones for speaking out about sexual assault when a perpetrator has brought frivolous defamation claims against them. In my experience, such defamation lawsuits are often nothing more than an abuse of process meant to silence and deter the prospect of justice for survivors after sexual violence. Thus, as a plaintiff's attorney, I beseech the State of Maryland to allow survivors, witnesses, and their supporters to raise civil immunity defenses whenever they speak out against sexual violence in good faith.

Of note, significant research on campus sexual assault shows that survivors more often turn to friends, loved ones, or other trusted figures before reporting to law enforcement or other officials.¹ Put another way, it is human nature to seek emotional support first after sexual trauma before taking formal action, such as making a criminal report, which bestows an immunity defense. Given this, Maryland must better protect victims, their supporters, whistleblowers, and other good Samaritans who speak out in good faith about sexual assaults.² Without such protection, I have every confidence that abusers will continue to use frivolous civil claims to cover up their crimes and silence victims and witnesses alike, further silencing reports of sexual violence statewide.

I urge you to pass House Bill 629 and am available to speak further about my support of this legislation.

Sincerely,

Laura L. Dunn, Esq.

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¹ See, e.g., U.S. DOJ, BJS, The Sexual Victimization of College Women (2000), <https://www.ojp.gov/pdffiles1/nij/182369.pdf>.

² Sexual violence disproportionately affects marginalized groups like women, children, and the LGBT+ populations.