



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting House Bill 89
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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 89.

House Bill 89 – Sexual Contact with an Animal – Charging and Sentencing

This bill improves Maryland's laws against sexual abuse of animals by allowing criminal charges and sentencing for acts against each individual animal abused.

In addition to causing pain and confusion to the animals involved, sexual abuse of animals is often linked to the sexual abuse of humans (Kowal, 1998), and has been recorded in (but is not limited to) cases of ritual abuse, domestic violence, and child abuse. One study examined the behavior of juvenile sex offenders and found that of those who had engaged in sex with animals, 96 percent admitted to sexual abuse against humans as well. Fleming et al. (2002). Another study of women who were victims of domestic violence found that some abusers request them to perform bestiality in an effort to cause further humiliation and torment. This study found that 41 percent of the women in physically violent relationships were asked to have sex with animals or forced to perform some form of sexual contact with an animal. Walker (1984).

House Bill 89's provisions regarding animals updates Maryland's laws regarding sexual abuse of animals by establishing that each animal harmed in violation of crimes against animals laws is a separate offense and an individual victim for sentencing purposes. This is needed to help protect both animals and humans.

Identical bills passed the House and Senate last session, but failed to be approved by both chambers by midnight on *sine die*.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 89**