



**Working to end sexual violence in Maryland**

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**Testimony Supporting Senate Bill 685 with Amendments**  
**Lisae C. Jordan, Executive Director & Counsel**  
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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 Education, Energy & the Environment Committee to report favorably on Senate Bill 685 with Amendments

**Senate Bill 685**

**Community Notification and Support After Allegations of Sexual Misconduct or Abuse**

This bill would require, among other things, development of a model response policy for local school systems to use to respond to credible allegations of sexual abuse and sexual misconduct.

Senate Bill 685 is a response to the very difficult situation which occurred after allegations of sexual misconduct and offenses by a teacher in an Anne Arundel County Elementary School and parents of students at the school were left without the support or information they needed. While one case prompted this legislation, the systemic failures revealed happen repeatedly and this legislation would provide needed structure when horrible things happen to students or investigations occur. As things currently stand, many schools are reluctant to share information about allegations of sexual misconduct or abuse within their institutions. Motivation for this reluctance can range from concerns for student privacy and the integrity of investigations, to a desire to protect against liability and harm to the alleged abuser.

SB685 creates a system that allows the needs of parents and students to be addressed in the aftermath of sexual misconduct and abuse. Abuse thrives on secrecy and creating a system that is transparent helps create a culture that discourages future abuse. Without strong systems in place to share information and resources, gossip and faulty advice can take over. SB685 will help make sure that parents and communities have access to accurate information and will

provide referrals to existing resources. It will help provide caretakers with the tools they need to respond to sexual abuse and – most importantly – how to talk with their children.

MCASA strongly urges that the Committee specifically adopt amendments requiring that information regarding the rape crisis centers certified under Criminal Procedure §11-923 and the child advocacy centers established under §13-2201 Health-General be included in the bill as resources (page 3, lines 24-25 and page 4, lines 15-16). Maryland has worked hard to support these resources and it is important to take steps to ensure communities are reminded of them in times of crisis. Information and services range from materials on [\*Understanding the Legal System When Your Child Has Been Sexually Abused\*](#), to counseling at rape crisis centers, to expert forensic exams at child advocacy centers.

SB685 Amendments:

On page 3, in line 25, after “SUPPORT RESOURCES” insert “INCLUDING RAPE CRISIS CENTERS CERTIFIED UNDER §11-923 OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE AND CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS ESTABLISHED UNDER §13-2201 OF THE HEALTH-GENERAL ARTICLE”

On page 4, in line 16, strike “IF ANY” and substitute “INCLUDING RAPE CRISIS CENTERS CERTIFIED UNDER §11-923 OF THE CRIMINAL PROCEDURE AND CHILD ADVOCACY CENTERS ESTABLISHED UNDER §13-2201 OF THE HEALTH-GENERAL ARTICLE”

On page 4, in line 3, after “BE DELAYED” insert “IF DISCLOSURE OF INFORMATION WOULD INTERFERE WITH AN INVESTIGATION OR PROSECUTION.”

Additionally, MCASA respectfully suggests that the Committee consider mandating record retention for a longer period of time, and that reports to the school board after an after-action review be mandated, not merely permitted.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the  
Education, Energy & the Environment Committee to  
report favorably on Senate Bill 685 with Amendments**

