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Executive Director

Maryland Commission for Women

51 Monroe Street, Suite. 1034 Rockville, Maryland 20850

Senate Bill 295 Stop Silencing Survivors Act

Sponsor: Senator Sara Love

Hearing Date: February 3, 2026

Position: FAVORABLE

The Maryland Commission for Women is in strong support of Senate Bill 295. This bill will strengthen survivor protections by establishing immunity for survivors, ensuring they cannot be held liable for disclosure, and are awarded attorney fees and costs under certain circumstances.

Sexual assault survivors often face significant financial and emotional harm when perpetrators use litigation intended to silence or intimidate them after disclosure. This includes costly legal fees and prolonged court proceedings. These lawsuits are not brought to seek justice, instead; they are used to punish survivors and Senate Bill 295 ensures survivors are able to disclose abuse without fear of retaliation. Since its inception, the Commission has supported empowering survivors and reducing barriers to speaking out, and this bill strengthens Maryland's commitment to survivor safety and fairness within the justice system.

Opponents of this bill may argue that this bill could restrict legitimate defamation lawsuits or infringe on freedom of speech. However, this bill preserves the right to sue if it can be shown by a preponderance of evidence that a claim was made in bad faith. This bill addresses the gap of shielding survivors from retaliatory lawsuits while maintaining access to the courts for legitimate claims.

The Maryland Commission for Women urges the committee to issue a favorable report on this important legislation. Protecting survivors from retaliatory legal action strengthens access to justice and reinforces Maryland's commitment to survivor protections. The Maryland Commission for Women Executive Director Ariana Kelly is available to answer any further questions at: Ariana.Kelly@Maryland.Gov