



MONTGOMERY COUNTY, MARYLAND
WOMEN'S DEMOCRATIC CLUB

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**Senate Bill 295 – Civil Actions – Immunity – Disclosure of Allegations of Sexually
Assaultive Behavior (Stop Silencing Survivors Act)**

**Judicial Proceeding Committee – February 3, 2026
SUPPORT**

Thank you for this opportunity to submit written testimony concerning an important priority of the **Montgomery County Women's Democratic Club (WDC)** for the 2026 legislative session. WDC is one of Maryland's largest and most active Democratic clubs with hundreds of politically active members, including many elected officials.

WDC urges the passage of SB 295. This bill provides protection for survivors from retaliatory litigation who disclose sexual assault in good faith, while preserving the right of the accused to sue for intentional or reckless disclosure of false information or malicious allegations of assault.

Some sobering statistics: Of all adult women residing in Maryland, about 457,000 adult women (19%), have experienced some form of completed or attempted rape in their lifetime. About 1,058,000 of Maryland's women (44%) and 520,800 of Maryland's men (23%), have experienced other forms of sexual violence (Bureau of Justice Statistics, Crime Victimization Survey, 1992-2015). Nearly 20% of all American women, 18 years or older, have been the victim of at least one attempted or completed rape in her lifetime. (National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey: 2015 Data Brief.)

These statistics are unacceptably high. Yet sexual assault is very much under-reported, and therefore, under-prosecuted. The stigma and trauma cause survivors to be fearful of coming forward to report these crimes. Throughout the U.S., an additional threat to survivors is that a defamation lawsuit can be filed against them. This scare tactic stops survivors from filing and testifying against the sex offender since it can retraumatize the survivor psychologically and add unnecessary legal expenses that further harm the survivor.

With the passage of SB 295 Maryland will join California, Rhode Island, Tennessee, New York and Washington State who have enacted laws protecting the survivors of sexual assault against retaliatory lawsuits. This bill will help empower survivors who choose to disclose sexual assault. It will also make our communities safer by making it more likely that assault victims will come forward and that sex offenders will be identified and held accountable.

We ask for your support for SB 295 and strongly urge a favorable Committee report.

Cynthia
Rubenstein
WDC President

Deborah Williams
WDC The Basics
Committee

Kate Stein
WDC Advocacy
Chair