



Letter of Support | NWDL Action
Maryland - HB 465 - 2026 Session
February 2, 2026

To: House of Delegates Judiciary Committee
Maryland State Legislature

Fr: Emma Davidson Tribbs, Executive Director
National Women's Defense League

Date: February 2, 2026

Re: HB 465 - Stop Silencing Survivors Act.

Chair Bartlett, Vice Chair Davis, and Members of the House Judiciary Committee:

On behalf of the National Women's Defense League (NWDL), a national, nonpartisan organization dedicated to preventing sexual harassment and supporting survivors through research, advocacy, and survivor services, we write in strong support of **House Bill 465, the Stop Silencing Survivors Act**.

HB 465 takes a thoughtful and measured step toward protecting survivors and those who support them by providing legal immunity for individuals who disclose, in good faith, information regarding allegations of sexually assaultive behavior. Too often, survivors and witnesses face the threat of defamation litigation simply for sharing their experiences or warning others. These threats can silence disclosures, discourage reporting, and allow harmful behavior to continue unchecked.

Encouraging Good-Faith Disclosures

The bill appropriately recognizes that disclosures about sexual misconduct are matters of public and community concern. By creating a presumption of good faith and placing the burden on a claimant to prove actual malice or intentionally or recklessly false statements, **HB 465** protects truthful and responsible speech while preserving remedies for genuinely malicious or knowingly false claims.

This balance is critical. Survivors deserve protection from retaliatory lawsuits, and those who are falsely accused must retain legal recourse. **HB 465** achieves both goals by setting a clear and reasonable legal standard grounded in established defamation principles.

Reducing Retaliatory Litigation and Judicial Burden

Retaliatory lawsuits are often used not to seek justice, but to intimidate and exhaust survivors financially and emotionally. These cases can consume significant court time despite lacking



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California - SB 849 - 2026 Session
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substantive merit. By clarifying immunity for good-faith disclosures and providing for attorney's fees when defendants must defend against unfounded claims, **HB 465** helps deter misuse of the courts and supports judicial efficiency.

Promoting Accountability and Public Safety

When survivors are able to speak without fear of legal retaliation, patterns of misconduct are more likely to come to light, institutions can respond appropriately, and communities are safer. Legal protections for good-faith disclosures do not encourage false claims — they encourage responsible reporting and open dialogue about serious harm. Importantly, **H.B. 465** accomplishes these protections through a clear civil liability standard and does not require new state spending or administrative infrastructure.”

HB 465 aligns with a growing national recognition that legal systems should not inadvertently shield sexually abusive behavior by punishing those who speak about it in good faith.

Conclusion

The Stop Silencing Survivors Act represents a careful, balanced approach to protecting survivor speech, preserving access to justice, and preventing abuse of the legal system. It reduces barriers to disclosure while maintaining accountability for malicious falsehoods.

NWDL respectfully urges the House of Delegates Judicial Proceedings Committee to support **HB 465** and advance this important legislation.

Thank you for your leadership and consideration.

Respectfully submitted,

Emma Davidson Tribbs
Co-Founder & Executive Director
National Women's Defense League Action Fund