



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting House Bill 935
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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) which provides direct legal services for survivors across Maryland. We urge the Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 935

House Bill 935 – Pre-Release Services for Women

This bill sets specific deadlines and requirements for creation of a pre-release facility for women who are incarcerated and preparing to return to their communities. The General Assembly previously enacted legislation requiring that the State:

- (1) identify a location, acquire property, and design a site plan for the prerelease unit for women on or before June 1, 2021;
- (2) begin construction or renovation of the facility on or before September 6 1, 2021; and
- (3) begin operating and providing services in the facility on or before June 8 1, 2023.

This has not happened and HB935 would set new deadlines for this important project.

86 percent of women who have spent time in jail report that they had been sexually assaulted at some point in their lives. While women represented just 13 percent of the US jail population between 2009 and 2011, they represented 67 percent of the victims of staff-on-inmate sexual victimization. (*Overlooked: Women and Jails in an Era of Reform*, Vera Institute, 2016)

Within our State, 12.7% of inmates at the Maryland Correctional Institute for Women reported being sexually victimized by a fellow inmate or staff member. (Allen J. Becket al, "Sexual Victimization in Prisons and Jails Reported by Inmates, 2011–12", Bureau of Justice Statistics, May 2013.)

Sexual violence is so pronounced among jailed and incarcerated women that Sen. Cory Booker, (D-NJ,) has labeled the overarching phenomenon as "a survivor-of-sexual-trauma to prisoner pipeline."

It is critical that women have access to services prior to release from incarceration. Pre-release services will include connecting sexual assault survivors with local rape crisis centers and other vital support. This can include therapy, support groups, and information about recovering from sexual violence.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judiciary Committee to
report favorably on House Bill 935**