



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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Testimony Supporting House Bill 1389
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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 Judiciary Committee to report favorably on House Bill 1389.

House Bill 1389 – Female Genital Mutilation

This bill provides needed clarification to Maryland's law prohibiting female genital mutilation (FGM). This includes adding FGM to the definition of abuse, which will create mandatory reporting obligations and permit child protective services to investigate. Transporting a minor out of state for purposes of FGM will be added to current criminal provisions, and a health care provider violating these provisions will be stripped of their license even if they plea nolo contendere or receive probation before judgment. Critically, this bill will also provide for civil remedies for the victims of this despicable procedure.

Female genital mutilation is a profound sexual assault, permanently injuring the woman or girl who is assaulted and causing lifelong repercussions. The World Health Organization reports that: Female genital mutilation (FGM) has no health benefits, and it harms girls and women in many ways. The practice involves removing and injuring healthy and normal female genital tissue, interfering with the natural functions of girls' and women's bodies. It can lead to immediate health risks, as well as a variety of long-term complications affecting women's physical, mental and sexual health and well-being throughout the life-course. All forms of FGM are associated with increased health risk in the short- and long-term. FGM is a harmful practice and is unacceptable from a human rights as well as a public health perspective, regardless of who performs it.

Maryland was at the forefront of prohibiting this abhorrent practice, HB1389 is a needed update to the law and provides survivors with more rights and imposes stronger penalties and deterrence.

**The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault urges the
Judiciary Committee to
report favorably on House Bill 1389**