



February 9, 2026

House Judiciary Committee
Maryland General Assembly
Annapolis, MD

Re: HB 0465 - Civil Actions - Immunity - Disclosure of Allegations of Sexually Assaultive Behavior (Stop Silencing Survivors Act)

Dear House Judiciary Committee Members,

I am a survivor of multiple sexual assaults. As a teenager and as an adult. To survive those assaults both mentally and physically, I had to talk about them to someone. I had to ask for legal help, medical help. Hell, if I hadn't have sought medical help ten years ago, I risked possibly a very quick death from sepsis. Yet, I am permanently injured and disabled from that assault.

During my healing journey, I pursued an education. I volunteered a lot. I spent a lot of time in Zoom meetings with organizers and activists talking about how we can help survivors, talking about messaging and policy issues and experiences reporting. In the legal field, I worked for firms that often interacted with vulnerable populations on issues that touched their lives.

Another thing that happened during my healing journey, pretty much immediately after the assault, was that I stopped talking to people more than I had to. I stopped turning associates into friends. I stopped hanging out. I stopped showing up places where you are expected to make connections and talk about your life. I started mostly talking to my Spanish speaking colleagues with the few things I knew how to speak about in Spanish, and they entertained me in this small talk. I used this as an excuse not to get to know people.

Because talking about what my life was really like was humiliating and uncomfortable, and not everybody's business. I don't want to go through the hell of having these multiple incidents debated in the court of public opinion. Sexual assault in all its forms is inherently an invasion of privacy. An invasion of bodily autonomy. For survivors to talk about it they have to abandon their secret and be vulnerable with whoever it is they are disclosing it. But the injustice piles up. When no one takes your claim seriously, many survivors turn to speaking out in public forums to try and rally support. We live in a world that dismisses claims of sexual assault and refuses to hold people accountable. It is no wonder so many have had to talk about their most humiliating moments publicly when no one privately would help.

Retaliatory lawsuits for disclosing in good faith are a real problem for survivors. Another version of this is the presumption of shared custody even in cases of interfamilial violence. When the victim speaks out



about abuse, they are almost immediately accused of fracturing the court's expectations of the parents being cooperative, and the victims are the ones that pay the price. Abusers know this. They bank on it.

Police and prosecutors turn down many more cases than they ever bring and assume that victims may have the means or wherewithal to pursue their claims civilly, even if they're permanently injured and struggling to get by. Family court assumes your character is at issue, which leaves victims permanently at risk of retaliatory family court actions. Your privacy in family court is continually at risk. Or at least until your child turns 18. Coercive and abusive litigation is common in family courts. This bill is needed to help survivors to stand up to abusive family court litigation.

If you seek to be a private person, which I do... If you were humiliated and terrified by your sexual assailants, as I was... you will still need to speak out and ask for help when your life is in danger, as I did. You will still be appalled at the way survivors are treated in this country, as I was. You will still be disillusioned and angry that this country really does not care about your sexual assault.

If we can't changed all of the US on this issue, we can at least try and make reporting sexual assault and rape a worthwhile and useful experience. Because what we have now is intimidation, abuse of courts, police interrogating victims, and empty promises.

Please vote favorably for the Stop Silencing Survivors Act.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads 'E. L. Reid'.

E. L. Reid, Esq.

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