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2008 Legislative Priorities

The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) is a non-profit membership organization that includes all of the State's eighteen 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 in the State of Maryland.

The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) supports legislation that promotes justice for survivors of sexual violence, accountability for offenders, and protection for the general public. MCASA responds to policy questions and legislative initiatives throughout Maryland's legislative session.

Rapists & Paternity

HB500/SB516 – House Judiciary Hearing 2/14/08, 1PM

Current law gives rapists who cause a child to be conceived the same rights as other biological parents. Additionally, if a rapist-parent cannot be located, current law requires that the victim's name be published in the newspaper. MCASA supports a bill to limit the parental rights of rapists when the child was conceived through rape and to increase protections for rape survivors who have a child conceived through rape. Lead Sponsor: Delegate Kathleen Dumais and Senator Jamie Raskin

3rd Degree Sex Offense and Person in Position of Authority

HB523 House Judiciary Hearing 2/19/08, 1PM

A bill to prevent sexual contact between children and persons with authority over the child (such as coaches and clergy) during "off-hours," when the child is not in the perpetrator's care. Lead Sponsors: Delegates Cheryl Glenn and Kris Valderrama.

Violation of Conditions of Pre-Trial Release

HB181/SB394, House Judiciary Hearing 2/21/08, 1PM

This bill would make it a crime to violate conditions of bail that impact victim safety (such as an order to stay away from the victim's home to have no contact with the victim). Lead Sponsors: Delegate Kathleen Dumais and Senator Jennie Forehand.

Juvenile Sex Offenders

MCASA will be closely monitoring efforts to address treatment, monitoring and registry of juvenile sex offenders. As introduced last session, these bills raised serious concerns; however, we anticipate that this session's proposals will have helpful amendments. Lead Sponsors: Senator Brian Frosh, Delegate Kathleen Dumais

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Funding

Although MCASA is aware of the difficult fiscal situation facing the State, rape crisis centers have had no increase in funding since 2002 and recent cuts to federal Victims of Crime Act (VOCA) funds are likely to result in cuts to federal funding of services. Counseling, advocacy and other support is vital for survivors of child sexual abuse and sexual assault. It is both the compassionate thing to do for those we have failed to protect and needed to provide the support victims need to participate in the criminal justice system.

Improving Coordination Between Child Advocacy Centers and Centers of Excellence and the Response to Child Sexual Abuse

Requiring child abuse professionals to work together to prevent children from further trauma during the investigation of child sexual abuse and other child maltreatment. Lead Sponsor: Delegate Karen Montgomery.