



Working to end sexual violence in Maryland

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2023 Legislative Priorities and Bills of Interest – Final Report

The Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault (MCASA) is a non-profit membership organization that includes all of 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 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. During the 2023 legislative session, MCASA continued to advocate in Annapolis for the needs of sexual assault survivors and the programs that serve them. Experienced legislators led the way as long-standing priorities were finally passed and new initiatives met with success. First year lawmakers helped bring fresh energy to Annapolis, and everyone felt the spirit of working together to address the needs of all people in the State. The new Governor Wes Moore, Lt. Governor Aruna Miller, Attorney General Anthony G. Brown, and Comptroller Brooke Lierman all contributed to a strong legislative session. Chair Luke Clippinger continued to quietly and effectively ensure that the needs of sexual assault survivors and other victims were considered by the Judiciary Committee and Chair Will Smith took the lead helping to expand access to civil justice and in responding to the *Dobbs* decision to protect abortion access. MCASA is grateful to everyone who worked to improve public policy for sexual assault survivors.

Funding is policy. Chief among MCASA’s responsibilities is to ensure that sexual assault survivors and the programs that serve them have needed resources. We are immensely grateful for the additional support the legislature added to the FY24 budget, and to the continued support from new Governor Moore. The Governor’s budget included mandated funding for sexual assault programs and also took the step of using state funds instead of federal dollars for this core support. Additionally, the legislature added \$1 million in funds for MCASA to support rape crisis centers (there was also a parallel appropriation for our sister coalition, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence). This needed support will help address increased needs of survivors and increased workforce challenges faced by

rape crisis centers. MCASA appreciates Chair Ben Barnes and Chair Guy Guzzone for their leadership and commitment to helping survivors. Senator Sarah Elfreth shined in her new role as subcommittee chair, joining the wonderful subcommittee chair Delegate Tony Bridges as they provided needed oversight for victim services funding.

The ***Victim Services Stabilization Act*** (SB148/HB186) also passed the General Assembly. This bill will be a national model for how to address the fluctuations of federal Victim of Crime Act (VOCA) funding. This funding is critical for rape crisis centers, but also for our allies at child advocacy centers, domestic violence programs, prosecutors' offices, forensic examination programs, and others who serve victims of crime. We could not ask for better sponsors than Chair Guy Guzzone and Chair Ben Barnes, both long-time and strong advocates for the needs of women, children, and others affected by sexual assault. MCASA was honored to lead a strong group of coalitions and programs as Maryland worked to fix this structural funding problem.

It was past time to repeal archaic provisions of the criminal code. The 2023 General Assembly decisively passed HB4/SB129, the bill to ***repeal marriage as a defense to sex crimes***. Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield accepted the challenge of being lead sponsor of this bill when she was first elected to the House, never dreaming that it would take so long to pass such a commonsense bill. Her grace under pressure and willingness to continue the fight over 5 sessions was inspiring. Senator Ariana Kelly took over senate leadership from now Secretary of State Susan Lee this year, building on past advocacy and moving the bill over the finish line with her passion and directness. The Maryland Legislative Agenda for Women (MLAW), Women's Law Center of Maryland, Attorney General's Office, and Maryland State's Attorneys' Association all held firm in the face of arguments to amend the bill and pass "spousal defense lite." Thank you to everyone who held firm to the principle that our right to consent should not change based on relationship status.

Another archaic law also met its demise with passage of SB54/HB131. While Maryland repealed the crime of sodomy in 2020, the law prohibiting "***unnatural and perverted***" ***sexual practices*** remained on the books. This law prohibited consensual sexual activity between adults and was historically used to intimidate the LGBTQ+ community. Delegate David Moon and Senator Clarence Lam were lead sponsors, and MCASA was honored to support them and our colleagues at FreeState Justice as this bill was passed.

Finally, after years of debate, tears, and effort, the bill to ***expand the statute of limitations in child sexual abuse cases*** was passed. MCASA has worked on legislation to expand civil justice for survivors since 2004, and it was tremendously moving to see the last legislative impediments fall away with passage of HB1/SB686. Chair CT Wilson deserves all of our respect and gratitude for his willingness to share his experiences as a survivor over and over again as he advocated for this bill. We also appreciate the many other survivors – some of them no longer with us – who spoke out and fought to hold perpetrators accountable. Your advocacy will help others heal.

The *Dobbs* decision brought the issue of **abortion access** to the forefront. Abortion access is critical to rape survivors and MCASA was part of a strong coalition of advocates working

on a package of bills to protect reproductive rights in Maryland. Speaker Adrienne Jones and President Bill Ferguson led the way starting the process to amend the constitution to protect reproductive liberty with HB705/SB798. Also of particular concern to the field was the need to protect survivors and those who help them at rape crisis centers, and elsewhere, from lawsuits and subpoenas from out-of-state. We appreciate the efforts of Delegate Nicole Williams, Chair Will Smith, and Attorney General Anthony Brown as HB808/SB859 was passed.

MCASA also began a new initiative to address the issue of **consent**. Maryland law does NOT permit prosecution for rape based on lack of consent – it requires more by focusing on victims and whether they resisted. MCASA respectfully suggests that **no one should have sex with someone else without their consent**. House Bill 412 was introduced this session and says just that – it is not an affirmative consent bill, consent could be given by words or action. Delegate Emily Shetty was our wonderful lead sponsor and will be joined by Senator Ariana Kelly next session. Schools all over Maryland teach children that consent is needed before sexual intimacy. It's time to base our law on consent too.

Coalition is part of MCASA's name and central to our identity. We work in coalition with many other advocates in Annapolis as we join forces to support common interests. Some of the many advocates we work with include Michelle Siri and Laure Ruth at the Women's Law Center of Maryland; our sister coalition, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence and its public policy director, Melanie Shapiro; the Maryland State's Attorneys' Association, especially the co-chairs of its Special Victims Committee Joyce King and Debbie Feinstein; the Maryland Children's Alliance and Wendy Myers and Neal Karkhanis; the Committee to Protect Maryland's Children; the Maryland Association of Nonprofit Organizations and Henry Bogdan; the Maryland Hospital Association and Jane Krienke, Robyn Elliott representing Planned Parenthood and other health care providers; and the Attorney General's Office under the leadership of Anthony Brown. MCASA could not make progress for survivors of sexual violence without the help of these amazing colleagues. Thank you.

Finally, please know that all of your calls, emails, texts, testimony and advocacy make a difference. Laws to help survivors of sexual violence would not pass if you did not participate in the process and tell lawmakers that this issue matters to you.

A full summary of our legislative work is below. Please reach out with questions, suggestions for next session, and to show support for survivors of sexual violence. info@mcasa.org.

Stay strong and thank you for your advocacy,

Lisae

Lisae C Jordan
Executive Director & Counsel
Maryland Coalition Against Sexual Assault

MCASA's Top Priorities – 2023 Session

Budget – Support for Rape Crisis Centers – HB200

MCASA supports full funding of rape crisis center services and monitors the budget process and individual funding bills. It is critical that we maintain support for the core services that sexual assault survivors need. The Governor's budget included mandated funding for sexual assault programs and also took the step of using state funds instead of federal dollars for this core support. Additionally, the legislature added \$1 million in funds for MCASA to support rape crisis centers (there was also a parallel appropriation for our sister coalition, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence). This needed support is much appreciated and will help address increased need and increased workforce challenges.

Victim Services Stabilization Act (VOCA) – SB148/HB186 – PASSED

A bill to provide state funds to back-fill VOCA shortages and eliminate the fluctuations in funding for core services. MCASA led a group of coalitions and service providers to help stabilize this core funding and allow victim services providers to focus on their clients instead of VOCA shortfalls. The Maryland Children's Alliance, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, Office of the Attorney General, Maryland State's Attorneys' Association, MANO, AARP-Maryland, Disability Rights Maryland, Women's Law Center of Maryland, Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Chiefs & Sheriffs Association, MD Department of Human Services, MD Human Trafficking Task Force, Maryland Hospital Association, and others all worked together to pass this important bill. Bill sponsors Chair Guy Guzzone and Chair Ben Barnes are both long-standing supporters of efforts to help survivors and were strong and effective champions. They are much appreciated. Lead sponsors: Chair Guy Guzzone and Chair Ben Barnes.

Marriage Should Not Be a Defense to Sex Crimes – Love is No Defense Act – HB4/SB129 - PASSED

Maryland allows marriage to be a defense to some sex crimes. It was past time to remove this archaic law from the books. MCASA especially appreciates everyone who stood firmly in opposition to amendments that would have continued to allow marriage as a defense to some crimes. Lead sponsors: Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield and Senator Ariana Kelly (introduced by former Senator Susan Lee).

Abortion Access – 4 bills – ALL PASSED

In wake of the *Dobbs* decision, the Maryland legislature acted swiftly and firmly to protect reproductive rights in our State. Abortion access is critical for rape survivors and the people who help them. MCASA was honored to be part of the coalition advocating for these important bills. We are especially grateful to Speaker Adrienne Jones for leading the effort beginning last session, and to President Bill Ferguson for joining her in the 2023 session. The amazing Robyn Elliott, Planned Parenthood of Maryland, and Michelle Siri, Women's Law Center of Maryland, led advocacy efforts and are also much appreciated.

Constitutional Amendment – HB705/SB798 – PASSED

A bill to enshrine reproductive rights in Maryland’s constitution. Passage of this bill will place the issue on the ballot for voters to consider. Lead sponsors: Speaker Adrienne Jones and President Bill Ferguson.

Shielding Providers & Survivors from Liability – SB859/HB808 – PASSED

A bill to protect rape crisis center staff, health care providers, people who help survivors, and survivors from out-of-state lawsuits and subpoenas when they seek or assist someone seeking abortion care. Attorney General Anthony Brown testified personally in support of this bill and MCASA was honored to speak on the sponsor panel with him and our colleagues from Planned Parenthood, the Women’s Law Center of Maryland, and health care associations. Lead sponsors:

Delegate Nicole Williams and Chair Will Smith.

Insurance Privacy – SB786/HB812 – PASSED

Preventing disclosure and exchange of health care information regarding abortion care. Lead sponsors: Senator Shelly Hettleman and Delegate Sandy Rosenberg.

Reproductive Care on College Campuses – HB477/SB341 – PASSED

Requiring that University of Maryland higher education institutions provide access to contraception and access to abortion care (via referral or on campus).

Lead Sponsors: Chair Brian Feldman and then-Delegate (now Senator) Ariana Kelly.

Statute of Limitations – Civil Child Sexual Abuse – HB1/SB686 – PASSED

This bill eliminates the statute of limitations in civil suits based on child sexual abuse and permits retroactive application of the law. MCASA honors Delegate CT Wilson and the enormous personal sacrifice his continued advocacy entailed. Lead sponsors: Delegate CT Wilson and Chair Will Smith.

Safe Harbor for Minor Victims of Sex Trafficking – HB297/SB292 – PASSED

Establishing “safe harbor” rules against criminal prosecution or juvenile proceedings against minors who are victims of sex trafficking and commit lower-level crimes. Gratitude goes to Amanda Rodriguez, Executive Director of TurnAround for her leadership over the years it took to pass this important legislation.

Lead sponsors: Senator Jeff Waldstreicher and Delegate Sandy Bartlett.

Repeal – Unnatural & Perverted Sexual Acts – SB54/HB131 – PASSED

A bill to repeal archaic language criminalizing consensual sexual activity between adults, historically used to intimidate the LGBTQ+ community. Lead sponsors: Senator Clarence Lam and Vice Chair David Moon.

Consent – HB412 – No Vote

A bill to create a statutory definition of consent and make it clear that people have the right to control who touches their body in a sexual manner. This was the first introduction of this bill and MCASA looks forward to continued work next session when Delegate Emily Shetty will be joined by Senator Ariana Kelly as a champion of this important legislation.

Lead sponsor: Delegate Emily Shetty.

Priority Bills and Bills of Interest by Subject Matter

Civil Rights and Civil Law

Statute of Limitations – Civil Child Sexual Abuse – HB1/SB686 – PASSED

This bill eliminates the statute of limitations in civil suits based on child sexual abuse and permits retroactive application of the law. MCASA honors Delegate CT Wilson and the enormous personal sacrifice his continued advocacy entailed. Lead sponsors: Delegate CT Wilson and Chair Will Smith.

Civil Rights Enforcement – Office of the Attorney General – SB540/HB772 – PASSED

Giving the Attorney General the authority to enforce civil rights, including through class actions, injunctions, investigation, and other remedies. This will help survivors of sexual harassment. Lead sponsor: Office of the Attorney General.

State Employees and Harassment – Time for Filing – HB309/SB574 – PASSED

Expanding the time that state employees have to file a harassment complaint. Lead sponsor: Delegate Karen Simpson and Senator Karen Lewis-Young.

Hate Crimes – HB13/SB5 – PASSED

Giving victims of hate crimes the right to file a civil action. This includes hate crimes based on gender, many of which involve sexual assault. Lead sponsors: Delegate Charlotte Crutchfield and Senator Ben Kramer.

SLAPP Suits – HB129/SB619

Passed House, no vote in Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

This bill clarifies and supports the exercise of constitutional rights to petition and exercise free speech by amending the law regarding SLAPP Suits – Strategic Lawsuits Against Public Participation. Sexual assault survivors across the country are increasingly facing lawsuits brought to discourage exercising their rights in college sexual misconduct proceedings and some survivors encouraged to speak out about sexual violence by the #MeToo movement have also been met with lawsuits designed to silence them. While not all of these retaliatory suits will qualify as SLAPP suits, some would. Lead sponsors: Delegate Sandy Rosenberg and Senator Shelly Hettleman.

Crimes and Criminal Procedure

Marriage Should Not Be a Defense to Sex Crimes – Love is No Defense Act – HB4/SB129 – PASSED

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Child Pornography – Streaming – HB233/SB226 – PASSED

Adding streaming with the intent to view to the definition of possessing child pornography. Lead sponsors: Delegate Robin Grammer and Senator Johnny Salling.

Person in Position of Authority – SB21/HB226 – PASSED

A bill to help close the remaining loophole in Maryland’s laws regarding persons in authority who sexually exploit children they have authority over. Statutory rape provisions protect younger children, child sexual abuse laws protect children during the time a child is actually in an adult’s care or supervision, certain school employees are always prohibited from having sex with their students, and new laws on sextortion provide the ability to prosecute those using threats of emotional distress to coerce sexual activity. However, the law still had gaps that failed to protect teenagers from sexual exploitation by extra-curricular activity instructors, scout masters, school volunteers, and other adults in authority. This bill will close these remaining gaps, so that all teens are protected. Special thanks to prosecutors Joyce King and Debbie Feinstein, the co-chairs of the MSAA Special Victims Committee, who took the lead advocating for this needed bill. Lead sponsors: Delegate Sara Love and Senator Bill Folden.

Lifetime Supervision – SB57/HB164 – PASSED

Adding additional types of sex crimes to the list of those classified as a crime of violence and to the list of offenses requiring lifetime supervision.

Lead Sponsors: Vice Chair Brian Crosby and Senator Jack Bailey

Indecent Exposure in the Sight of a Minor – SB208/HB212

Almost made it (again), but failed to pass

This bill would increase penalties for indecent exposure with prurient intent in front of minor. This type of behavior can be a gateway to more serious sex offenses against children and traumatizing to young people. The bill passed both the House and the Senate, and the House had concurred with Senate amendments when the bill failed to receive a final vote on sine die. This is the second sine die in a row the bill failed to pass. We appreciate Vice Chair Brian Crosby for his tenacity and continued advocacy to protect children. Lead sponsors: Vice Chair Brian Crosby and Senator Jack Bailey.

Visual Surveillance with Prurient Intent – HB126

Passed House, no vote in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

A bill making it clear that the prohibition against visual surveillance with prurient intent applies in private residences and increasing the penalty for visual surveillance with prurient intent of a minor. Lead sponsor: Delegate Jesse Pippy.

Interception of Communications – Reclassification – HB362

Passed House, no vote in the Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee

Reclassifying intercepting a communication of another without their consent from a felony to a misdemeanor. This includes, for example, using a cell phone to record a conversation with another person without their consent. Another bill, SB209, did pass and begins the process of a comprehensive review of crime classification. Lead sponsor: Delegate Karen Simpson.

Interception of Communications – Exception for Imminent Threat – HB174/SB749, SB754 – No votes

Allowing an exception to the prohibition against recording another without consent when the person making the recording believed there was imminent threat of danger from a list of crimes including rape, other crimes of violence, stalking, and abuse. SB754 would have created a task force to analyze the issue. MCASA believes this is an issue that needs to be addressed and notes there have been cases where rape survivors have recorded the crime and the recording was both inadmissible and the survivor could have been (but was not) charged with a felony. We also appreciate the concerns our sister coalition, MNADV, has expressed and look forward to working together to find a way to find a fair and effective balance of policies. Lead sponsors: Senator Bill Folden and Delegate Robin Grammer.

Crime Victim Rights

Survivors Seeking Criminal Justice – Explanation of Decision Not to Prosecute – Reintroduction – HB174/SB391 – PASSED

Few sexual assault survivors seek help through the criminal justice system. When they do, State's Attorneys Offices do not always prosecute. This bill requires that, at the request of the victim, the prosecutor provide an explanation of this decision. Lead sponsors: Senator Karen Lewis Young and Delegate Karen Simpson.

Pre and Post Trial Release – HB411/SB487 – PASSED

Clarifying that orders to refrain from contacting a victim pre or post trial also apply while the defendant is detained. Lead sponsors: Delegate Elizabeth Embry and Senator Jeff Waldstreicher.

Body Cameras and Victim Privacy – SB40

Passed Senate, no vote in House Judiciary Committee

Body-worn digital recordings can include images of survivors following some of the most traumatic and difficult times in their lives and care should be taken to ensure the justice system does not add to the trauma by publically disclosing body camera footage. At the same

time, recordings can provide important information about how victims are treated. This bill balances these concerns and addresses a gap in the current public information act law. MCASA expects this will be reintroduced next session with a smaller scope. Lead Sponsor: Senator Charles Sydnor.

**Privacy – Protecting the Identity of a Minor – HB1032
Passed House, no vote in Senate Judicial Proceedings Committee**

Protecting identifying information about minors from being included in public records of criminal or juvenile proceedings. This is similar to current protections in federal law. Lead sponsor: Delegate N. Scott Phillips.

CICB Reform – HB861/SB788 – Support with Amendments – No vote

A bill to reform the Criminal Injuries Compensation system by reconstituting the Board, increasing access, and increasing funding. MCASA supports with amendments to protect victim privacy (similar to provisions currently in place for rape kit reimbursement), limit the Board’s ability to order medical exams, and make it clear that perpetrators may not receive compensation for injuries related to the crime they committed even if there is no conviction. There was broad consensus that the Board needs reform, however, a number of operational concerns needed to be addressed and MCASA anticipates advocacy in this area will continue over interim and next session. Lead sponsors: Delegate Stephanie Smith and Senator Shelly Hettleman.

Extending Period of Time to Dismiss Charges After Finding of Not Competent to Stand Trial – SB507 – Passed Senate, no vote in House Judiciary Committee

This bill would permit a crime victim to file a request to extend the time a case would remain open after a finding that the defendant was incompetent to stand trial. Additionally, it would expand the time period a case remains open from 5 to 10 years (or the maximum sentence) in first degree murder cases and cases involving sexually assaultive behavior. Lead sponsor: Senator Anthony Muse.

Health and Education

Abortion Access – 4 bills – ALL PASSED

In wake of the *Dobbs* decision, the Maryland legislature acted swiftly and firmly to protect reproductive rights in our State. Abortion access is critical for rape survivors and the people who help them. MCASA was honored to be part of the coalition advocating for these important bills. We are especially grateful to Speaker Adrienne Jones for leading the effort beginning last session, and to President Bill Ferguson for joining her in the 2023 session. The amazing Robyn Elliott, Planned Parenthood of Maryland, and Michelle Siri, Women’s Law Center of Maryland, led advocacy efforts and are also much appreciated.

Constitutional Amendment – HB705/SB798 – PASSED

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Shielding Providers & Survivors from Liability – SB859/HB808 – PASSED

A bill to protect rape crisis center staff, health care providers, people who help survivors, and survivors from out-of-state lawsuits and subpoenas when they seek or assist someone seeking abortion care. Attorney General Anthony Brown testified personally in support of this bill and MCASA was honored to speak on the sponsor panel with him and our colleagues from Planned Parenthood, the Women’s Law Center of Maryland, and health care associations. Lead sponsors: Delegate Nicole Williams and Chair Will Smith.

Insurance Privacy – SB786/HB812 – PASSED

Preventing disclosure and exchange of health care information regarding abortion care. Lead sponsors: Senator Shelly Hettleman and Delegate Sandy Rosenberg.

Reproductive Care on College Campuses – HB477/SB341 – PASSED

Requiring that University of Maryland higher education institutions provide access to contraception and access to abortion care (via referral or on campus).

Lead Sponsors: Chair Brian Feldman and then-Delegate (now Senator) Ariana Kelly.

SAEK Kits - Tracking HB759/SB615 – PASSED

Creating a tracking system for rape kits, accessible to survivors. This was developed through the Attorney General’s Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Funding and Policy Committee. Lead sponsors: Senator Shelly Hettleman and Delegate Sandy Bartlett.

SAEK Kits – Retention - HB758/SB789 – PASSED

Increasing mandatory retention of kits to 75 years and clarifying that self-administered kits shall be transferred to law enforcement (not subject to testing requirements). Additionally mandating the Attorney General’s Consumer Protection Division to assist with evaluation of how self-administered kits are marketed and whether protections should be imposed. This bill was developed through the Attorney General’s Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Funding and Policy Committee. Lead sponsors: Senator Shelly Hettleman and Delegate Sandy Bartlett.

Board of Nursing – Operational Reforms – SB960/HB611 – PASSED

Responding to years of operational challenges, this bill creates needed infrastructure and operational support for the Board of Nursing. MCASA offered strong support for this bill because of continual difficulties faced by nurses seeking certification as forensic examiners and the detrimental impact this has had on survivors seeking sexual assault forensic exams. Lead sponsor: Senator (formerly Delegate) Ariana Kelly.

Comprehensive Health Education – HB119/SB199

Passed House, no vote in Education, Energy & the Environment Committee

A bill requiring a comprehensive health education curricula for K-12 students, including information regarding sexual assault prevention and healthy relationships. Lead sponsors: Chair Vanessa Atterbeary and Senator Clarence Lam.

Hear Our Voices Act – TIX – HB16 – PASSED

Requiring that schools notify K-12 students, parents, faculty and staff about the title IX coordinators, process, and available supports for students who are victims of sexual misconduct at school. Lead sponsor: Delegate Jazz Lewis.

Access to PrEP – SB64 – No vote

Providing pharmacists with the authority to provide PrEP, medication to prevent HIV. This is important to rape survivors and also to people subject to sex trafficking. Lead sponsor: Senator Clarence Lam.

Sex Trafficking and Child Exploitation

Safe Harbor for Minor Victims of Trafficking – HB297/SB292 – PASSED

Establishing “safe harbor” rules against criminal prosecution or juvenile proceedings against minors who are victims of sex trafficking and commit lower level crimes. Gratitude goes to Amanda Rodriguez, Executive Director of TurnAround for her leadership over the years it took to pass this important legislation. Lead sponsors: Senator Jeff Waldstreicher and Delegate Sandy Bartlett.

Department of Transportation – Child Exploitation and Human Trafficking Awareness – SB203/HB1053 – No votes

A bill to require awareness training for transportation-sector employees, including truckers, taxi-cab drivers, etc., regarding child exploitation and human trafficking. Lead sponsors: Senator Michael Jackson and Delegate Eric Ebersole.

Funding and Grant Administration

Budget – Support for Rape Crisis Centers – HB200

MCASA supports full funding of rape crisis center services and monitors the budget process and individual funding bills. It is critical that we maintain support for the core services that sexual assault survivors need. The Governor’s budget included mandated funding for sexual assault programs and also took the step of using state funds instead of federal dollars for this core support. Additionally, the legislature added \$1 million in funds for MCASA to support rape crisis centers (there was also a parallel appropriation for our sister coalition, the Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence). This needed support is much appreciated and will help address increased need and increased workforce challenges.

Reimbursement of GOCPYVS grants – In state fiscal year 24, the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services will be required to reimburse grants over \$50,000 on a monthly basis upon request of the grantee.

VOCA administration – In state fiscal year 24, the GOCPYVS will move to a state fiscal year and grants beginning October 1, 2023 will be for 9 months and end June 30th. Current grantees will receive continuation grants provided services and related expenses are

allowable under federal regulations. Additional funding will be awarded to new grantees or current grantees on a competitive basis.

Victim Services Stabilization Act (VOCA) – SB148/HB186 – PASSED

A bill to provide state funds to back-fill VOCA shortages and eliminate the fluctuations in funding for core services. MCASA led a group of coalitions and service providers to help stabilize this core funding and allow victim services providers to focus on their clients instead of VOCA shortfalls. The Maryland Children’s Alliance, Maryland Network Against Domestic Violence, Office of the Attorney General, Maryland State’s Attorneys’ Association, MANO, AARP-Maryland, Disability Rights Maryland, Women’s Law Center of Maryland, Maryland Chapter of the American Academy of Pediatrics, Chiefs & Sheriffs Association, MD Department of Human Services, MD Human Trafficking Task Force, Maryland Hospital Association, and others all worked together to pass this important bill. Bill sponsors Chair Guy Guzzone and Chair Ben Barnes are both long-standing supporters of efforts to help survivors and were strong and effective champions. They are much appreciated. Lead sponsors: Chair Guy Guzzone and Chair Ben Barnes.

Prompt Payment for Grant Recipients – SB112/HB328 – PASSED

This bill will require Maryland state government to pay non-profit grant recipients within 37 days of a properly submitted request, making the grant payment rules the largely the same as those for procurement contracts. MCASA appreciates the leadership of Henry Bogdan from the Maryland Associations of Nonprofit Organizations (MANO) and his advocacy on this bill. Lead sponsors: Senator Cheryl Kagan and Delegate Anne Kaiser.

NIMBL – SB53/HB84 – PASSED

Creating interest-free, micro-bridge loans for non-profit organizations who have been awarded grants but have not received proceeds yet. Lead Sponsors: Senator Cheryl Kagan and Delegate Cathi Forbes.

Miscellaneous (Family Law, Utility Accounts, Cyberflashing)

Divorce – Reform of Grounds – HB14/SB36 – PASSED

A bill reforming the grounds for divorce by eliminating fault-based grounds and replacing them with 6 months of separation or irreconcilable differences. Lead sponsors: Chair Vanessa Atterbeary and Senator Chris West.

Custody Decisions – SB28/HB1020 – No votes

A bill to codify factors to be considered when making a decision regarding custody of a child, including protections for survivors of abuse. Lead sponsors: Senator Chris West and Delegate Susan McComas.

Cyberflashing Taskforce – HB600 – No vote

A bill to establish a task force to examine how to craft a law that prohibits cyberflashing without running afoul of First Amendment protections. This issue will be worked on with the Attorney General’s Office over interim. Lead sponsor: Delegate Lesley Lopez.

Victims of Abuse and Utility Accounts – HB630 – PASSED

Requiring utility company to permit a victim of abuse (including sexual assault or child sexual abuse) to terminate a utility contract. Congratulations to lead advocate Melanie Shapiro from MNADV for her success helping this bill pass. Lead sponsor: Delegate Pam Queen.

**Join MCASA to support our policy work and
learn more about how you can help end sexual violence in Maryland**

Visit mcasa.org

