

NJCASA Encourages Amendment to A2154 to Provide Closed Circuit Testimony to Survivors of Sexual Assault

The New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault (NJCASA) is the statewide advocacy and capacity building organization that represents the twenty-one county-based rape crisis centers, and the Rutgers University Office of Violence Prevention and Victim Assistance. We elevate the voice of sexual violence survivors and service providers by advocating for survivor-centered legislation and express appreciation to the Sponsors and Co-Sponsors for introducing A2154.

NJCASA is respectfully advocating that this bill be amended to expand this legislation to include victims of sexual assault. As has been well documented, many survivors don't move forward to press charges and seek prosecution out of fear of continued harassment, intimidation, and retaliation. Providing an opportunity for sexual assault survivors to testify via closed circuit television will provide increased access to justice for some of our most vulnerable citizens.

A September 2011 publication issued by the National Crime Victim Law Institute, states:

“Sexual assault is a ‘significant social and health problem’ in this country, and rape alone affects hundreds of thousands of new victims each year. Less than 20 percent of rapes committed against adults are reported to law enforcement, and less than 40 percent of reported rapes result in criminal prosecution; in other words, less than 8 percent of rapes committed against adults are criminally prosecuted.

A growing body of research documents the trauma suffered by adult sexual assault victims. Post-Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) is a common consequence of sexual assault, especially for rape victims. Rape victims may also experience depression, substance abuse, and suicidal thoughts or behavior, along with a number of physical problems such as chronic pelvic pain, gastrointestinal disorders and hypertension.

Testifying in court can be particularly traumatic for rape victims. Facing the perpetrator in court and recalling horrifying and personal details of the rape forces the victims to relive the crime mentally and emotionally.”

NJCASA respectfully requests that the bill be amended to include the same provisions for survivors of sexual assault.