

Trauma of rape testimony outlined

"Rape is the only crime where a victim feels ashamed," said Elaine L. Newman, executive director of the Maryland Commission on the

The possibility that they may have to disclose in court their past sexual histories discourages many women from pressing rape charges, according to a Maryland feminist leader.

Status of Women.

"Rape is the only crime where a victim's lifestyle is probed and held up to scorn and suggestion," she told a House committee Thursday. "We have made rape so unpleasant to report that estimates of unreported rape range as high as 80 per cent."

Newman was testifying for a bill banning introduction in

rape cases of a woman's sexual history, except her relationship with the defendant.

Anne Arundel County State's Attorney Warren B. Duckett Jr. agreed.

"Too many times I've seen victims cringe during the process of eliciting very personal information.

"Too often jurors begin to question a victim's testimony

— because she is reacting to the tenor of questions," he added.

Sen. Rosalie S. Abrams, D-Baltimore, said questions concerning a woman's chastity or promiscuity have no place in

a sexual offenses trial.

"We don't ask if a murdered woman is a worthy woman or not, nor should we ask if a violated woman is worthy or not," she said.