

Rep. Hurd: Legislation to strengthen protections for sexual assault victims heads to the governor

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MADISON – Legislation authored by Representative Karen Hurd (R-Withee) and Senator Howard Marklein (R-Spring Green) that will strengthen protections for sexual assault victims was approved by the State Assembly on Tuesday with wide bipartisan support. A key component of the proposal, [Senate Bill \(SB\) 413](#), extends the statute of limitations for second-degree sexual assault from 10 years to 20 years.

“This bill makes critical improvements to state law to assist victims of sexual assault and hold perpetrators accountable,” said Rep. Hurd. “Many victims of sexual assault delay reporting their assault for years due to a variety of factors, including trauma, fear of retaliation, or dependence on the perpetrator. By increasing the statute of limitations for second-degree sexual assault, we will allow more time for victims to come forward and seek justice.”

Another significant improvement made by SB 413 is the expansion of existing immunity statutes for misdemeanor alcohol and drug violations to include victims of sexual assault and witnesses who assist them.

“Up to 84% of sexual assaults involve the use of drugs or alcohol by the victim,” said Rep. Hurd. “Fear of getting in trouble for drug or alcohol misdemeanors often prevents survivors from coming forward to report their assault. By adding those seeking to report a sexual offense to existing immunity statutes, we are making it more likely that these violent crimes are reported and that those who commit these crimes are held accountable.”

In addition, SB 413 creates an improved lease termination process for victims of sexual assault. With passage by the State Assembly, this bill now heads to Governor Evers' desk.