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Sexual Assault Kit Bill Passes Legislature

Landmark legislation prevents backlogs that plagued Wisconsin for 30 years

Madison, WI – Thousands of sexual assault kits have sat unidentified and unprocessed in nearly 1,000 Wisconsin hospitals, clinics, and police evidence lockers. Some of these kits have remained untested for nearly 30 years. To the dismay and disgust of sexual assault survivors and criminal justice advocates, no statutory procedures or requirements exist in state law to ensure the proper and timely handling and processing of these critical evidence samples.

“The state failed to meet the basic, minimum expectations of sexual assault survivors for too many years,” said the legislation’s lead author David Steffen (R-Howard). “Sexual assault cases need to be dealt with delicately and with utmost urgency. After working with DOJ, law enforcement, prosecutors, victim advocates, sexual assault nurse examiners, and the State Crime Laboratory this bill was crafted to ensure these cases are handled with the attention and seriousness they deserve.”

Under the bill, when a health care professional collects evidence of a sexual assault, the victim will have the choice to report to law enforcement or not. If the victim chooses to report to law enforcement, under the proposed legislation the health care professional will notify law enforcement within 24 hours after collecting the sexual assault kit. The law enforcement agency then has 72 hours to collect the kit from the health care professional, and then has 14 days to send the kit to the state crime laboratories for analysis. After the kit has been processed it will be sent to a law enforcement agency and stored for 50 years.

For more information please contact Representative Steffen. He can be reached at (608)266-5840 or by email at Rep.Steffen@legis.wisconsin.gov.