

Legislation Addressing Sexual Assault Kit Handling Continues to Garner Bi-Partisan Support

Written by Melissa Agard Press

Thursday, 28 January 2021 14:10 - Last Updated Saturday, 30 January 2021 11:26



Legislation to protect victims, originally authored by Senator Agard in 2017, sends a clear message that our government recognizes, believes, and stands with survivors.

MADISON- This week, Senator Melissa Agard (D-Madison) joined a growing list of co-authors of LRB-0436/1. Senator Agard first authored this legislation in 2017. LRB-0436/1 works to prevent the backlog of untested sexual assault kits by ensuring the proper collection and storage procedures— a crucial step in supporting survivors of sexual violence that sends a clear message that our government recognizes, believes, and stands with survivors.

Senator Agard released this statement regarding the legislation:

“It is great to see growing bipartisan consensus that survivors of sexual assault across the state deserve better. This legislation is an important step forward. As the original author of this bill since 2017, I am confident it will provide accountability and consistency as to how sexual assault kits are stored and processed. I am glad others are coming to see the effect good policy can have.

“This legislation will ensure a procedure is in place that upholds survivors’ dignity, choice, and the right to a fair and just process, protecting those who choose not to report at the time of an assault, or who change their minds. We know that sexual violence can be a hard conversation

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to have, and that reporting can be one of the most challenging steps for a sexual assault survivor to take. Survivors deserve the respect to report when they are ready— storing kits for the time frame specified in this legislation provides this respect by taking the traumatic nature of sexual assault into account.

“LRB-0436/1 works to hold offenders accountable for their crimes and provide justice for survivors. While no piece of legislation can ever erase the trauma of sexual violence, failures to effectively and efficiently collect, submit, and store kits should never be a barrier to justice. This legislation is an important first step to providing victims with affirmation and a path toward justice. We need to do all that we can to support survivors of sexual assault. I was proud to work with my colleagues in the Legislature, community advocates, and Attorney General Kaul to co-author this vital legislation last session and in 2017, and I am so proud to, once again, support this legislation to continue standing in solidarity with the survivors of sexual violence.