Written by Melissa Agard Press
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Madison Senator supports bills that would address the sexual assault kit testing backlog and create a tracking system for survivors.

MADISON - Thursday, Senator Melissa Agard (D-Madison) testified in front of the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety in favor of Senate Bills 71 and 94, bills that would address the sexual assault kit testing backlog and create a tracking system for survivors.

Senator Agard released the following statement:

“Senate bills 71 and 94 are important pieces of legislation to advocacy groups and survivors of sexual violence across our state. They are bipartisan pieces of legislation. While it sometimes feels like we are destined to continue operating solely within our own parties- I’m hopeful that what we are taking up today can show all of our colleagues how we can be a better, more deliberative - and cooperative - body.

“I have championed legislation regarding sexual assault kits and our state’s backlog for three sessions. I have heard from victims and survivors of sexual assault. I carry their stories with me, and have promised them I will work tirelessly on their behalf to create a better system. The bills before you today 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 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.

“Due to the hard work of a bipartisan group of legislators and expertise of advocates, law enforcement, health care providers, and Attorney General Josh Kaul - I am confident these bills are comprehensive in their approach to solving the issue of sexual assault kit storage, processing, and tracking in Wisconsin.

“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. As elected officials, we must do all that we can to support survivors of sexual assault.”