

Maryland State Senate Committee  
March 9, 2023

TESTIMONY

SB-615 Governor's Office of Crime Prevention, Youth, and Victim Services - Sexual  
Assault Evidence Collection Kit Reporting Program

Submitted by:  
Caitlin Silver Negron, M.S.  
Rise US Volunteer  
Maryland Resident

**Position:** Support

Over 2 million Marylanders are impacted by rape and sexual assault. Statistically speaking, each of us knows and loves a survivor whether they've disclosed it to us or not. I personally know many survivors, and I've stood by their sides as the systems in place failed each and every one of them when they chose to act against their assailant. Even when simply attempting to navigate the resources they need to heal from the trauma, survivors are met with obstacles. (maybe provide an example here of an obstacle you've witnessed? Maybe say something like, "not being able to access information or track the forensic evidence collected from your body after an attack can cause retraumatization and leaves survivors in the dark.").

Sexual violence is a complex issue and encompasses a variety of horrid acts, from rape to sexual coercion. And even while sexual assault does not discriminate- no one is immune from the evil of others- survivors in one state are afforded rights that survivors in Maryland are not.

It would be naive to expect a world where rape and assault never occur. While we can dream of such utopia, we have to live in the reality that **we are failing survivors by ignoring their needs, limiting their support options, and floundering to provide adequate space and care to let them heal and thrive in the aftermath of and ongoing impacts of their trauma.** Protections for survivors in the form of proper reporting of rape kits must be provided by the state government in order to maintain the dignity of every survivor, and a clear picture of the nature of this issue in our state.

Survivors come in all shapes, sizes, ethnicities, social statuses, economic classes, religions, sexual orientations, and genders. Every survivor deserves to be treated with respect through an equitable justice process. I ask you to think of the survivors in your life, and consider what you wish their experience had been in the aftermath of their assault. You have the power to build systems that will provide them with the dignity they deserve. The state of Maryland currently is behind the curve in the work of advocating for a fair and safe political and social landscape for these survivors. However, with the passage of the Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kit Reporting Program, we can become a leader in this fight. I urge you to vote in favor of this bill and be the advocates that survivors in this state and nation deserve in their elected officials.