



TESTIMONY FOR SB0789

Sexual Assault Evidence Collection Kits - Preservation and Storage

Bill Sponsor: Senator Hettleman

Committee: Judiciary

Organization Submitting: Maryland Legislative Coalition

Person Submitting: Cecilia Plante, co-chair

Position: FAVORABLE

I am submitting this testimony in favor of SB0789 on behalf of the Maryland Legislative Coalition. The Maryland Legislative Coalition is an association of activists - individuals and grassroots groups in every district in the state. We are unpaid citizen lobbyists and our Coalition supports well over 30,000 members.

One of the most disturbing and debilitating things about victimhood is losing any ability to find and punish your abuser. Being a victim of sexual assault is traumatizing enough without the very people who are supposed to provide support and help catch the perpetrator mishandling or disposing of the only physical link to the crime. Sexual assault kits should be preserved and treated with the same respect as any evidence collected from a crime scene.

This bill will require hospitals and health care providers to transfer the kits to a law enforcement agency and for law enforcement agencies to submit it to a laboratory for testing unless the victim declines to give consent or if there is clear evidence disproving the allegation of sexual assault. Additionally, the kit cannot be disposed of for 75 years after it was collected.

We should not dismiss or destroy evidence of such a brutal crime. It shows a complete lack of respect for the victim and allows the perpetrator to continue to commit these crimes.

We strongly support this bill and recommend a **FAVORABLE** report in committee.