

February 19, 2024

The Honorable Luke Clippinger
Chair, House Judiciary Committee
House Office Building

RE: Support – HB1047- Consumer Protection- Self-Administered Sexual Assault Evidence Collection

Dear Chair Clippinger and Committee Members,

I am a nurse practitioner serving as the Clinical Director of the Forensic Medical Unit at Adventist HealthCare Shady Grove Medical Center and a member of the Maryland Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Policy and Funding Committee. More than 2 out of 3 people who experience sexual assault do not report it to the police.¹ Others do not engage in any help-seeking behavior, including seeking medical care or connecting with a victim advocate. For those who do seek medical care, a workforce shortage of forensic nurse examiners may impact their ability to access a medical forensic examination.² Additionally, a victim might be reluctant to seek a medical forensic examination at a hospital or clinic for many reasons including shame³, a relationship to the offender⁴, and age^{5,6}.

The personal barriers to seeking medical care after a sexual assault faced by every individual will never be fully known. What we do know is that if the door to self-administered sexual assault kits is completely closed, an option for taking some step toward healing is taken off the table for an unknown number of survivors.

HB 1047 allows for the possibility of self-administered kits to be made available by the state with a thoughtful, person-centered, and methodical approach. This approach will afford protection to the person who has experienced sexual assault by allowing Maryland to ensure that education is provided about the risks, benefits, and unknowns of using a self-administered sexual assault kit. This bill is the next step in a responsible approach to providing Marylanders with the information they need to make an informed decision about what to do after a sexual assault and an additional response option based on self-determined needs after a sexual assault.

I ask for a favorable report for Maryland HB1047.

Respectfully,



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References

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