



**State of Maryland
Department of State Police**
Government Affairs Unit
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POSITION ON PROPOSED LEGISLATION

DATE: February 11, 2025
BILL NUMBER: House Bill 675 **POSITION:** Letter of Information
BILL TITLE: Public Safety – Rape Kit Testing Grant Fund - Alterations

REVIEW AND ANALYSIS

This legislation seeks to change the use of the Rape Kit Testing Grant Fund. The legislation does allow for the continued use of the fund for testing, but repeals the use of the fund by forensic labs to outsource testing, purchase equipment and supplies for testing, and personnel costs related to testing. While use of the fund is expanded for the Attorney General’s Office and the State Sexual Assault Coalition, funds are specifically restricted from supporting the Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Tracking System designed to keep victims informed of the activity on their kits.

Under current law, the Rape Kit Testing Grant Fund is administered by the Governor’s Office of Crime Prevention and Policy (GOCPP). The fund provides law enforcement agencies with funding to pay for testing of sexual assault evidence kits by forensic laboratories. As the fund relates to testing, it may be used for outsourcing of testing as well as in house equipment and supplies to test the kits. There are two funding sources, the state grant fund and the federal Sexual Assault Kit Initiative.

The state Rape Kit Testing Grant was established to focus on current sexual assault kits. This was done in order to accommodate increased numbers of sexual assault kit submissions resulting from legislation that now requires all sexual assault kits to be tested. House Bill 675 proposes to change the original purpose of the state Rape Kit Testing Grant Fund to a purpose already covered by the federal Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) grant program.

Since the implementation of the state Rape Kit Grant fund, logistical challenges have prevented forensic laboratories from fully utilizing the available funding, despite their intent to do so. Issues such as funding gaps between calendar years, the limitations of single-year grant periods, and the inability to use the funds for necessary physical laboratory improvements to enhance in-house testing capacity have arisen. These concerns were all brought to the attention of the Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Policy and Funding Committee.

Testing sexual assault kits is a vital step in providing justice for survivors of sexual assault. Supporting rape kit testing demonstrates a commitment to the rights and dignity of survivors. The testing and collection of these kits are essential for ensuring justice and preventing future crimes and supporting the right of sexual assault survivors. As written, House Bill 675 does not enhance the state’s ability to increase testing of sexual assault kits.

The Maryland Department of State Police supports any effort that will augment efforts to get the backlog of sexual assault kits tested and address current caseloads. We are aware that there are discussions regarding amendments to this bill and we are happy to continue to work with the sponsor on them.

The Maryland Department of State Police hopes you find this information useful as you consider House Bill 675.