

MN Senate Judiciary Committee

Testimony in support of SF 2019

March 1, 2023

Dear Members of the Committee,

I have worked with victims of Sexual Assault and my job as Coordinator and Advocate is one that I take great pride in. When a victim comes in and has been assaulted, they have to trust that you will get them the help and services they need and deserve. When they are telling you in detail about their assault, you as an advocate are encouraging and supporting them with every ounce of your soul. You use empathy to navigate through their story, giving you better understanding of what took place, and with that you provide direction that will empower them, letting know they are strong and will get through this. But at first when they come forward they are lost and hopeless, and feel little to no self-worth. They don't know who they can or cannot trust and just want this nightmare to be over, but really it is just the beginning. You tell them that this is not their fault and what they are doing is in their best interest and taking this step will help them to be heard so that legal actions can be taken....only to have to tell them that the kit testing takes time....too much time!

It's hard to watch a victim who is listening to your every word, the empathy you are giving is gaining their trust, the tears start to dry, and their head comes out of their hands as they are started to feel heard and the strength in their actions of coming forward are letting their shoulders regain posture as they are believing in themselves again. They have the courage to keep moving forward, then you tell them that the kit testing takes up to months, but here is a tracking number so you can follow the path of where your kit is at. This is the part of my job that hurts worse than an unexpected gut punch. After you tell them about the 'hindering timeline' (AKA Kit testing) the shoulders roll, the head drops and the tears start to fall once again as they feel there will never be any justification and the hell will just continue because that kit is what allows them from to start moving forward, and the validation for what happened to them is finally being heard and proven and now hoping to move on from the hell that was placed upon them. But instead they feel like they have already lost, as time is not on their side.

The average rape takes 4.5 hours (RAINN.org) and the actual DNA testing takes 24-72 hours (choicedna.com). I think they have lost enough time, and should be granted some grace and have the turn-around time for the assault kits be made the priority! Charges and prosecution should also be vital priority in getting the kit tests through in an expedited manner. Why would we want to take the chance of having another victim by a repeat offender only to

have the excuse and place blame on “the testing time”? Don’t take that chance, pick up the pace.

Victims deserve better.

Thank you,

Angie Ness-Byer

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