



Sha'a Ka Atyátx'i Noowú
DOVE COTTAGE
A Place of Peace

Aiding Women in Abuse and Rape Emergencies

"Serving Juneau and Nine Southeastern Communities"

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Dear Representative Tarr,

I'm writing to express support for House Bill 20. Alaska's sexual crime rates are three times higher than the national average, and child sexual assault rates are six times the national average. Strengthening and clarifying our language around sexual assault moves Alaska closer to being able to prosecute these crimes which have tremendous negative impact on the victims, and work towards ending this pattern.

While Sexual Assault Kits have been backlogged for years with thousands of kits going untested and justice not being served, the legislature has worked to remedy this in past years, and this remedy is still in process. HB 20 seeks to create a realistic yet aggressive timeline for kits to be turned over to the crime lab, tested by the state, and then requires notification of the victim that testing has been completed. Victim notification helps lessen the heavy burden of not knowing the progress of a case and moves towards closure for victims. This bill also requires the yearly reporting of the backlog of sexual assault kits to include more detail about the numbers of kits that are going untested why those kits are not being tested.

At AWARE, we work with sexual assault survivors who generally assume that if they go through the process of having a sexual assault exam and kit, that that kit is being processed and in a timely way. This is a reasonable expectation for someone who has survived felony sexual assault, and HB 20 works to bring this reasonable expectation closer to reality.

Sincerely,

Saralyn Tabachnick, M.Ed., LPC
Executive Director

