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HB 275 Sexual Assault Examination Kits/Tracking February 2024

Please accept this statement as support for HB 275. The Alaska Network on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault (ANDVSA) is Alaska's state coalition of victim services providers. Twenty-four programs across the state focus on services to victims/survivors of sexual assault, stalking and domestic violence.

We appreciate the efforts made by the Governor and the Legislature over the past few years to bring current testing of sexual assault examination kits by the State Crime Lab (crime lab). HB 275 is a further step in securing kits and getting them submitted to the crime lab. As important, if not more, are the sections of the bill providing the ability for victims/survivors to track their kit through the process.

Track Kit has been in use for approximately six months; providing a way for victims/survivors to be notified as the kit moves through the system-from the healthcare provider to law enforcement, to the crime lab; and in the crime lab following from the time the lab receives the kit, to when it is tested, to when the results are in. Track Kit provides a critical resource for victims/survivors. We appreciate the work the crime lab has done to make it a reality.

In addition to Track Kit being available to victims/survivors, it also affords the justice system the opportunity to monitor the flow of the kits from one part of the system to the next. We will be able to see if there are bottlenecks prior to the kits getting to the crime lab and then the length of time it takes at the crime lab to get kits tested and receive results.

We note that currently in statute, law enforcement officers are required to get the kits to the crime lab within 30 days of being notified by health care providers that the kit is available for pickup. It will be interesting to see if kits are transferred quicker than the 30 days. We think they probably are.

The bill will codify a time frame (7 days) for healthcare providers to notify law enforcement that the kit is available to be sent to the crime lab. Healthcare providers are being trained to aim for notifying law enforcement that the kits are ready to be transferred within 7 days of the initial forensic exam so this timeframe makes sense. Through Track Kit we will be able to see if this turns out to be a realistic timeframe or if it needs to be tightened or loosened.

Track Kit is primed to be of great benefit to victims/survivors who want to know how the kit is moving forward through the system and we support putting it into statute.

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