

ALASKA STATE LEGISLATURE



REPRESENTATIVE GERAN TARR

February 28, 2020

CS Sponsor Substitute for House Bill 182 (STA)

“An Act relating to testing of sexual assault examination kits; and providing for an effective date”

Sponsor Statement

HB 182, an act relating to testing of sexual assault examination kits, would mandate that all sexual assault examination kits collected in Alaska be tested within six months. Currently kits must be tested within one year. This new timeline will help prevent a backlog of rape kits and quickly deliver answers to the victims. This bill is the next step in Rape Kit Reform and compliments recent legislation and funding appropriations used to address the huge backlog of rape kits statewide and the appalling rates of sexual assault in Alaska.

From the 2019 Report on Untested Sexual Assault Examination Kits, the Department of Public Safety reported that in 2019 there was an inventoried 1,696 untested rape kits. In comparison to 2018 there were 2,568 untested rape kits, and in 2017 there were 3,484 untested rape kits. While this is great progress, Alaskans want a shorter timeline to ensure that a backlog will not occur again.

Unfortunately, despite this progress, according to a new FBI report published in November 2019, Alaska still has the highest rate of sexual assault in the nation. Also, according to the report, Alaska saw an 11% increase in the number of sexual assaults reported to law enforcement in 2018 and Alaskans report four times more sexual assaults than the national average.

Clearly much more needs to be done to address the high rates of sexual assault in Alaska. HB 182 is the logical next step in Rape Kit Reform. By requiring rape kit testing within six months this bill will help bring justice to survivors and ultimately help reduce the unacceptable rates of sexual assault in Alaska.