

North Slope Borough

Arctic Women in Crisis
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Joshua Stein, LMSW, Director

03/08/2024

The Honorable Scott Kawasaki
Chair
Senate State Affairs
State Capitol Room 119
Juneau AK, 99801

The Honorable Matt Claman
Vice-Chair
Senate State Affairs
State Capitol Room 429
Juneau AK, 99801

RE: SEXUAL ASSAULT EXAMINATION KITS/TRACKING HB 275/SB 193

Dear Mr. Chairman and Mr. Vice-Chairman:

My name is Virginia Walsh, and I am a victim service provider who resides in Utqiagvik. I strongly support HB 275/SB193 legislation that requires all law enforcement agencies and healthcare providers to participate in a comprehensive statewide Sexual Assault Examination Kit Tracking Program (SAKI). SAKI is essential to enhance the criminal justice response to sexual assault ensuring that victims/survivors receive justice.

For far too long, survivors have been kept in the dark about the status of their rape kits. Too many survivors left the medical facility and never heard again about their kit; research from *End the Backlog* a national repository for information on the rape kit backlog shows that not having access to such information can severely impede recovery. This bill will assist in meeting the requirement of AS 44.41.065(a)(3) to notify the victim within 14 days a kit has been tested.

As an advocate in rural Alaska, I work with sexual assault survivors who often feel isolated and hopeless. I hope that SAKI an online tool that enables victims/survivors to follow the forensic paths of their own sexual assault kit in some small way helps empower survivors and restore their dignity. Most important is the hope that more survivors will come forward

if they feel that there is a trauma-informed process in place that allows them to achieve what they need for their healing journey and closure.

I appreciate your help, and hope you will support this important legislation.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Virginia C. Walsh". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large initial "V" and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Virginia C. Walsh

AWIC Program Coordinator