

Testimony in support of HB2228

Dear Chairman Patton and Committee Members

This testimony is in support of House Bill 2228, regarding sexual assault evidence collection kits.

Rarely do we have the opportunity to see how legislation can play out in the lives of survivors and for criminal justice professionals. The Sexual Assault Kit Initiative (SAKI) led by the KBI with the collaboration of law enforcement, prosecutors, advocates, forensic laboratories, and medical professionals provided this insight. The SAKI project performed the extraordinary task of testing all sexual assault evidence collection kits across the state of Kansas that have previously been untested. The outcome of that project demonstrated the need to test all sexual assault evidence kits connected to a law enforcement report to identify offenders, assist prosecution, and support survivors of sexual violence. That project has come to a close, but this does not have to be the end of testing all sexual assault evidence collection kits.

When we ask survivors of sexual violence to submit to an evidence collection examination, the message is implied that the criminal justice system will work in their behalf to fully investigate and prosecute the person that has committed a heinous crime against them. Failure to test the kit and fully process all evidence of the crime is one way to break the trust of that survivor and other survivors who are making the decision to report the crime or not to report. Survivors are acting in good faith by submitting to the evidence collection and examination. It is

important that we respond to that good faith by testing all sexual assault evidence collection kits when the crime has been reported to law enforcement.

It is within your power to prioritize our state's response to sexual violence. I urge you to take this opportunity to let survivors know that sexual violence is a crime that is responded to and taken seriously. Please let survivors of sexual violence know that law enforcement investigators and prosecutors are doing their best in protecting our communities by reviewing **all** of the evidence.

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