



DAVID STEFFEN

STATE REPRESENTATIVE • 4TH ASSEMBLY DISTRICT

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CONTACT: Rep. David Steffen
(608) 266-5840

Rep. Steffen Proposes Legislation to Prevent Future Backlog of Sexual Assault Kits

Madison—Today Representative David Steffen (R-Howard) proposed legislation addressing timelines relating to sexual assault kits.

Under current law, there is no statutory procedure for the collection and processing of sexual assault kits. This lack of a standard process led to a backlog of kits that were not being submitted to the state crime laboratory for testing. The proposed legislation creates procedures that will prevent a backlog in the future. The bill also gives victims a voice and ensures that their kits will be handled in a timely matter.

"Backlogs and bureaucracy should never be a barrier to justice," said Rep. David Steffen. "Sexual assault victims deserve a more effective and efficient system than that, and today, we are taking a major step forward in delivering it."

Under the proposed legislation, when a health care professional collects sexual assault evidence, a victim will have the choice to report to law enforcement or not. If a victim chooses to report, the health care professional will notify law enforcement within 24 hours after collecting the sexual assault kit. The law enforcement agency then has 72 hours to collect the kit, and then 14 days to send the kit to the state crime laboratories for analysis. If the victim chooses not to report, the health care professional will send the kit to the state crime laboratories for storage within 72 hours.

This bill is the result of thoughtful collaboration from a variety of stakeholders such as DOJ, law enforcement, prosecutors, victim advocates, sexual assault nurse examiners, and the State Crime Laboratory.

"April is Sexual Assault Awareness Month," commented Rep. Steffen. "The collection and processing of sexual assault kits is an important issue for survivors of sexual assault and April is a fitting month to introduce this bill."

For more information please contact Representative Steffen. He can be reached at (608)266-5840 or by email at Rep.Steffen@legis.wisconsin.gov.

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