



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Assembly GOP fails to do what is right for survivors & our state

MADISON – Representative Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) released the following statement regarding the Assembly Bill 844 being heard today on the Assembly floor:

“I am deeply disheartened at the shameful actions of my Republican colleagues, who have risen to new and troubling divisive heights. Today, the Assembly GOP has utterly failed to do what is right for survivors of sexual violence and for our state.

In April 2019, a group of bipartisan legislators, including myself, joined with Attorney General Josh Kaul to introduce legislation that would prevent another backlog of untested sexual assault kits from occurring ever again in our state. This bill came to fruition after countless hours of collaboration with stakeholders and pragmatic consideration for how to best implement these changes and protect the residents of our state. This legislation, Assembly Bill 214, has 72 bipartisan co-sponsors—over 50% of all Wisconsin legislators, and a majority of State Assembly members—and the support of law enforcement, health professionals, community advocates, and survivors alike. Ultimately this bill was passed by the Wisconsin State Senate on October 8th, yet still was not given a public hearing in the Assembly.

Egregiously, today the Wisconsin State Assembly under GOP leadership will take up a different piece of similar, yet divisive, legislation—Assembly Bill 844. This legislation came out less than two weeks ago, was fast-tracked through the legislative process, and has no bipartisan support or consideration from stakeholders. The path that Assembly Bill 844 has taken is shocking, and is not the way that our state should be governing. Over 50% of the Assembly supports AB-214, yet due to political games AB-844 will be passed instead by GOP lawmakers. This legislation is inaccurate and insufficient, and is truly a disservice to our state.

The continued politicization of this issue is despicable, and I am disappointed to see the new and divisive heights that have been brought forth today by my Republican colleagues. Assembly Bill 214 is truly a thoughtful and nonpartisan piece of legislation that is what is best for survivors and for our state.

While the inevitable outcome of today’s Floor session and the passage of AB-844 is not what I had hoped, I implore my colleagues to put politics aside and take up AB-214 for the victims of sexual violence. I vow to continue to fight for survivors, and am proud to vote against AB-844 today.”

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Melissa Sargent is a State Representative in the Wisconsin Assembly, representing the 48th Assembly District, which covers the east and north sides of the city of Madison and the village of Maple Bluff.

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