



April 16, 2015

MADIGAN APPLAUDS HOUSE COMMITTEE PASSAGE OF CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT LEGISLATION

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today applauded members of the House Judiciary – Civil Committee for passage of a measure that will help colleges and universities prevent and address sexual assaults. House Bill 821, sponsored by Rep. Michelle Mussman (D-Schaumburg) passed by a vote of 8-3.

Earlier this week, Madigan hosted the second of three summits being convened around the state to discuss the Preventing Sexual Violence in Higher Education Act, which will set standards to prevent and respond to sexual violence at higher education institutions throughout Illinois.

“It is clear that the number of incidents involving sexual violence is still frighteningly high, and many survivors feel that the response of institutions is lacking,” Madigan said. “Colleges and universities have a legal and moral obligation to respond effectively and investigate allegations to the fullest extent of the law. We must make sure that every student of higher education in Illinois is provided a safe environment to learn.”

Statistics show the prevalence of sexual violence on college campuses, many of which go unreported, and yet universities across the country have failed to investigate allegations properly.

Among the most troubling, studies show that one in five undergraduate women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape. In fact, the U.S. Department of Education has said women between the ages of 16-24 experience the highest rates of sexual assault and rape among women, and about 6 percent of male undergrads become victims of sexual assault. Yet, a U.S. Senate survey last year of 440 four-year higher education institutions found that over 40 percent of the schools had not conducted a single investigation into incidents alleging sexual violence. The U.S. Department of Education’s Office for Civil Rights is now investigating approximately 100 schools for failure to comply with federal law in preventing, investigating and reporting incidents of sexual assault on their campuses, possibly jeopardizing Title IX funding for those institutions.

The Act will ensure that Illinois colleges and universities:

- Develop a clear, comprehensive campus sexual violence policies, including detailed incident reporting options and university response guidelines;
- Notify student survivors about their rights, including their right to confidentiality and what protections the university can provide to ensure the student’s health and safety, such as obtaining an order of protection, changes in class schedules or campus housing, and the availability of medical and counseling services;
- Provide a confidential advisor to survivors to help them understand their options to report the crime and seek medical and legal assistance;
- Adopt a fair, balanced process for adjudicating allegations of sexual violence; and
- Train students and campus employees to improve awareness and responsiveness to allegations of sexual violence.

The legislation builds on the Attorney General’s work spanning more than a decade to protect survivors of sexual violence and strengthen their rights. Madigan led an effort to significantly increase the number of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners in hospitals throughout Illinois and worked to pass legislation to mandate the testing of sexual assault evidence kits. Madigan has funded dozens of organizations that provide critical victim services to survivors and strengthened Illinois law to protect victims of stalking, a crime that is more likely to occur on college campuses that can lead to sexual violence and other crimes.

The legislation will now be considered by the full House of Representatives.

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