



Press Releases

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MADIGAN HOSTS SUMMIT ON CAMPUS SEXUAL VIOLENCE, DETAILS BILL TO STRENGTHEN SCHOOLS' RESPONSE TO INCIDENTS

Edwardsville — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today convened a summit at Southern Illinois University Edwardsville (SIUE) to address campus sexual violence and detail legislation to strengthen responsiveness to incidents at colleges and universities around the state to ensure a safe environment for students and a timely process to respond to and investigate allegations of sexual violence.

Joining Madigan at today's summit was keynote speaker Julia Dixon, a survivor of campus sexual assault while at the University of Akron and an ambassador for PAVE, Promoting Awareness, Victim Empowerment. They were joined by advocates, school administrators, survivors and law enforcement officials, including SIUE Chancellor Julie Furst-Bowe, the U.S. Department of Education's Office of Civil Rights, the Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault, the Rape, Abuse and Incest National Network (RAINN), the McLean County State's Attorney, the St. Clair County State's Attorney, the Normal Police Department, Carl Sandburg College, Eastern Illinois University, and Southern Illinois University Carbondale.

"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."

Today's summit is the last of three that Madigan's office has hosted around the state as the Attorney General works to pass the Preventing Sexual Violence on Campus Act that will increase protections for Illinois students and improve responsiveness to sexual violence by universities and colleges. Last week Madigan joined Vice President Joe Biden at the University of Illinois at Urbana-Champaign to talk about the initiative and to encourage students to speak up and take proactive steps to stop sexual violence on campuses.

The summits address sobering statistics that show the prevalence of sexual violence on college campuses, but also the fact that incidents often go unreported and 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. And 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.

In conjunction with today's summit, Madigan detailed House Bill 821, the Preventing Sexual Violence in Higher Education Act, sponsored by Rep. Michelle Mussman and Sen. Toi Hutchinson, which will set standards to prevent and respond to sexual violence at higher education institutions. The legislation passed the Illinois House last week by a vote of 113-2 and will be taken up by the Illinois Senate. The Act will ensure that Illinois colleges and universities:

- Develop a clear, comprehensive campus sexual violence policy, including detailed incident reporting options and university response guidelines;
- Notify student survivors about their rights, including their right to privacy 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 victims 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 summit follows the Attorney General's work over 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.

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