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MADIGAN CALLS ON STATES TO IMPROVE RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT***Attorney General Testifies in D.C. on Landmark Illinois Rape Kit Law***

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today testified on Capitol Hill about the need for states to improve their response to incidents of sexual assault and institute mandatory testing of sexual assault evidence.

"Sexual assaults have reached epidemic proportions in our nation, yet few survivors report these crimes because they don't believe they will be taken seriously," Attorney General Madigan said. "The backlog of sexual assault kits is evidence that survivors are not necessarily wrong. Eliminating the backlog is essential in our fight against these crimes and in our effort to restore faith in the criminal justice system."

Madigan testified earlier today before the U.S. Senate Judiciary Committee's Subcommittee on the Constitution in a hearing titled "Taking Sexual Assault Seriously: Rape Kit Backlog and Human Rights."

Madigan co-chairs a statewide Sexual Assault Working Group in Illinois to address troubling statistics that show disturbingly high numbers of women are sexually assaulted but a distressingly low number of women report these crimes to authorities. Studies show that one in five women will be sexually assaulted in their lifetime, but fewer than four in 10 survivors report their rape to police. Madigan said many survivors do not report based on fears that they will not be believed, lack of support from friends and family, or a lack of confidence in the criminal justice system.

Madigan testified that a significant barrier to achieving justice for these survivors has been a nationwide backlog of untested rape kits that was discovered by human rights advocates. In response, Madigan led an effort to pass the Sexual Assault Evidence Submission Act in 2010, making Illinois the first state in the nation to mandate the testing of rape kits within 10 days of law enforcement taking custody of a kit.

Yet, state crime labs continue to fail to keep pace and ensure that evidence submitted in cases of sexual assault is tested in a timely way. Madigan said kits should be tested within 30 days of receipt in order to increase the likelihood that the offender will be arrested, prosecuted and convicted and demonstrate to survivors of sexual assault that their crime merits reporting to law enforcement.

Madigan also called for implementation of tracking systems to track a sexual assault evidence kit from a hospital to a crime lab and through the criminal justice system to improve efficiency and accountability.

Madigan urged more states to increase access to Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners, nurses who are specially trained to collect physical evidence following a sexual assault and to respond to the psychological needs of a survivor. The involvement of SANES ensures that a survivor's first contact with the criminal justice offers support and encourages a willingness to report their crime. Madigan has led an effort to significantly increase the number of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners in hospitals throughout Illinois.

Lastly, Madigan called for improving and increasing training for law enforcement and prosecutors across the country to change their response to sexual assault. Madigan said that training is critical to make sure that law enforcement encourages survivors, responds with compassion and thoroughly investigates these crimes.

For more information, read the Attorney General's [written testimony](#) from the hearing.

Attorney General Madigan has worked for more than a decade to protect survivors of sexual violence and strengthen their rights. Currently Madigan is working to pass the Preventing Sexual Violence on Campus Act in Illinois, which will set standards for colleges and universities to prevent and respond to sexual violence in the face of studies that show one in five undergraduate women will become a victim of rape or attempted rape.

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