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May 21, 2015

AG MADIGAN: SENATE UNANIMOUSLY PASSES CAMPUS SEXUAL ASSAULT BILL

Springfield — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today applauded members of the Illinois Senate for passage of a measure that will help colleges and universities prevent and address sexual assaults. House Bill 821, sponsored by Sen. Toi Hutchinson (D-Olympia Fields) and Rep. Michelle Mussman (D-Schaumburg) unanimously passed by a vote of 56-0.

This spring Madigan convened summits 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.

"Incidents of sexual violence on college campuses far too often go unreported in part because schools' responses are inadequate and inconsistent," Madigan said. "This measure will ensure that colleges and universities institute clear policies that encourage survivors to come forward and help them access crucial services to enable them to recover from these horrific crimes."

"Schools should be prepared to respond to sexual assaults immediately, which means helping survivors understand their reporting options, access health care, or even provide alternate housing options," Hutchinson said. "I appreciate Attorney General Madigan's strong advocacy to support survivors of rape and sexual assault."

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 also 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 allegations of 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 policy, including detailed incident reporting options and university response guidelines;
- Notify student survivors about their rights, including their right to confidentiality, and the protections the university can provide to ensure the student's health and safety, such as obtaining an order of protection, changing 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 prevent sexual violence and 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 has 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 and that can lead to sexual violence and other crimes.

The legislation will now return to the House for a concurrence vote.

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