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MADIGAN: HOUSE COMMITTEE PASSES BILL TO IMPROVE RESPONSE TO SEXUAL ASSAULT CRIMES

Joint Sexual Assault Working Group's Legislation Encourages Survivors to Report Crimes, Improves Training for Law Enforcement & Ensures Justice & Healing for Survivors

Chicago — Attorney General Lisa Madigan today announced the House Judiciary-Criminal Committee passed legislation to encourage more sexual assault survivors to come forward and increase the successful prosecution of sexual assault crimes in Illinois. The legislation, initiated by the Joint Sexual Assault Working Group, was passed unanimously.

Senate Bill 3096, sponsored by Rep. Emily McAsey, was drafted with the Joint Sexual Assault Working Group led by Madigan, Cook County State's Attorney Anita Alvarez, St. Clair County State's Attorney Brendan Kelly and Illinois Coalition Against Sexual Assault (ICASA) Executive Director Polly Poskin. The Working Group was formed to address troubling statistics that show survivors of sexual assault are not reporting their crimes to Illinois authorities. Senate Bill 3096 will implement victim-centered policies and require sexual assault response training for law enforcement authorities and first responders, including 911 operators, in order to improve the response to survivors and encourage more survivors to report their crimes.

"Our working group took an honest and comprehensive look at how the criminal justice system handles sexual assault cases," Madigan said. "By requiring training and specific protocols for Illinois law enforcement and first responders, we will encourage more sexual assault survivors to come forward and then be able to pursue justice on their behalf."

"Improving the way rapes and sexual assaults are handled – from first responders down the line to prosecutors – is crucial to encouraging survivors to report their attacks," Rep. McAsey said. "I will continue working with my colleagues in the House to pass SB 3096."

The bill will make the following changes to improve the response to sexual assault crimes in Illinois:

- Law enforcement agencies and 911 centers will be required to put in place evidence-based, trauma-informed, victim-centered policies governing responses to sexual assault.
- Law enforcement officers will be required to complete written reports of every sexual assault complaint, regardless of who is reporting the crime and where it occurred.
- Victim-sensitive training will be increased for law enforcement investigators, first responders and 911 operators.
- Survivors will be able to request updates on the status of the testing of their sexual assault evidence by the state crime lab. Illinois State Police will be required to respond to status requests unless doing so would compromise or impede an ongoing investigation.
- The time period for survivors to consent to the testing of their sexual assault forensic evidence will be extended from 14 days to five years after the assault. Survivors under the age of 18 at the time of the crime will have five years from their 18th birthday to consent to the testing of the evidence.

The Joint Sexual Assault Working Group has worked over the past year to address statistics that show only a fraction of sexual assault survivors come forward to Illinois authorities. During fiscal year 2015, 9,593 individuals called Illinois rape crisis center hotlines and 8,908 survivors received in-person services. In that same time period, 10,241 children were referred to child advocacy centers for sexual abuse. But studies suggest that between only 5 to 20 percent of rapes are reported to law enforcement, and only a small number of those reported are prosecuted.

Attorney General Madigan, working with the Joint Sexual Assault Working Group, successfully advocated last year for legislative action to prevent sexual assault survivors from receiving bills for medical forensic examinations, expand sexual assault response

training at all Illinois police academies, and increase funding for the Illinois State Police's crime lab.

Members of the Joint Sexual Assault Working Group include the Illinois State's Attorneys Association, the Illinois Association of Chiefs of Police, the Illinois Sheriffs Association, the Illinois Criminal Justice Information Authority, the Illinois State Police, the Illinois Health and Hospital Association, Cook County Sheriff Tom Dart, the Chicago Police Department, Rape Victims Advocates, The Center for the Prevention of Abuse, YWCA of Metropolitan Chicago, the Illinois Department of Health Care and Family Services, and the Illinois Department of Public Health.

"From a prosecutor's perspective it is absolutely critical to ensure that law enforcement is doing everything possible to conduct thorough sexual assault investigations and meticulous evidence collection," said State's Attorney Alvarez. "This comprehensive legislative initiative will help to ensure that this occurs in every single incident of sexual assault and will help to create an environment of accountability for sexual offenders in all of our communities."

"Victims of sexual assault deserve the very best from their justice system," said State's Attorney Kelly. "This tremendous effort and the support of the Chiefs of Police Association, the Sheriffs Association and the State's Attorneys Association shows the broad level of commitment there is among law enforcement to getting this right. I appreciate the Attorney General's leadership on an important issue yet again."

"The majority of sexual assault survivors will never report being attacked because they do not think they will be believed or receive the support they need in order to seek justice, and this legislation lays the foundation for a response that is centered around the needs of survivors: from law enforcement to medical and counseling," Poskin said. "ICASA is proud to partner with Attorney General Madigan on the Joint Sexual Assault Working Group, and we urge strong support of this legislation."

Attorney General Madigan has worked for more than a decade to protect survivors of sexual violence and strengthen their rights. Last year, Madigan drafted and worked to pass the Preventing Sexual Violence on Campus Act to set standards for colleges and universities to prevent and respond to sexual violence. She also successfully advocated for enhanced crime victims' rights under the state's Constitution to ensure they have a voice in the criminal justice system.

Madigan also worked to make Illinois the first state in the country to mandate the testing of sexual assault evidence kits. She additionally led an effort to significantly increase the number of Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners in hospitals throughout Illinois, who are trained to collect physical evidence following a sexual assault, respond to the psychological needs of a survivor, and testify in court. Madigan's office also funds dozens of Illinois organizations that provide critical victim services to survivors, and strengthened Illinois law to protect victims of stalking.

Attorney General Madigan's Crime Victim Services Division manages several programs that provide assistance to crime victims and service providers. For more information about the Crime Victims Services Division or the rights afforded to survivors of crime, please visit Madigan's [website](#) or call her office's toll-free Crime Victims' Assistance Line: 1-800-228-3368 or 1-877-398-1130 (TTY).

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