



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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### **Lack of Urgency, Transparency in Sexual Assault Kit Testing Necessitates Audit**

*Representative Sargent requests an official audit of the DOJ's sexual assault kit backlog and testing policies and procedures*

(MADISON) - Representative Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) announced today she has requested an official audit of the Wisconsin Department of Justice's sexual assault kit backlog and testing policies and procedures.

"The Department of Justice cannot honestly keep looking sexual assault victims in the eye and telling them they're doing all they can. Whatever they're doing isn't good enough. It's staggeringly inefficient, wasteful, and demonstrates a lack of urgency that, quite frankly, is insensitive at best and absolutely deplorable at worst. Victims of sexual assault in our state deserve better than the Department of Justice's excuses. At this point, any attempt at justification for why they continue to drag their feet adds insult to injustice.

The Wisconsin Department of Justice has accepted grant funding in excess of \$5 million over the past year and a half to help address the more than 6,000 sexual assault kits backlogged and awaiting testing. Last week, mere days after the Department of Justice indicated "hundreds" of kits had been tested, an article from the *Milwaukee Journal Sentinel* revealed only *nine* kits have been tested of those backlogged—less than 1% of the number of kits sitting on shelves and awaiting testing.

"We're long past the point where irresponsibility becomes negligence. We have victims who have not received justice, and we have perpetrators—possibly serial offenders—who could be continuing to victimize people in our communities because the rape kits of their previous victims are sitting on shelves collecting dust. It's unacceptable.

"Given the amount of money the Department of Justice has accepted and the severe lack of progress they've made, I have requested that the Legislative Audit Bureau audit this grant funding and the policies and processes by which kits are tested," Representative Sargent said.

"We need to have honest, realistic conversations about how the Department of Justice is handling kits and how we can prevent this from happening in the future. I look forward to working with colleagues on both sides of the aisle to address this backlog and ensuring sexual assault victims in our state can finally have the justice they deserve."

A copy of Representative Sargent's letter requesting an official audit can be found [here](#).