



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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**A Crucial Milestone in the Fight for Justice for Survivors**

MADISON– Representative Melissa Sargent (D-Madison) released the following statement regarding the successful efforts to end the sexual assault kit backlog in Wisconsin:

“Yesterday, Attorney General Josh Kaul announced that the remainder of the sexual assault kit backlog has been tested. After years of failures that resulted in thousands of kits not being submitted for testing— and thousands of sexual assault survivors left with no answers— this egregious back log has come to an end. I commend Attorney General Kaul, the DOJ, and the Wisconsin State Crime Lab, for their tireless efforts over the last six months, and the countless others who have worked on behalf survivors over the years. This is a crucial milestone in the fight for justice for survivors.

Further, DOJ announced that Wisconsin has been awarded a \$1.8 million grant to continue their critical work on sexual assault cases in Wisconsin, and to fund a statewide kit tracking system. This is imperative to maintaining Wisconsin’s current successes, and in preventing a future backlog from occurring. Additionally, a kit tracking system allows sexual assault survivors an anonymous and private way to track and receive updates about the status of their sexual assault kit, and provides them with the timely and accurate updates that they deserve.

While this is great news for our state, there is plenty of work left to be done. [Assembly Bill 214](#), a bipartisan effort to prevent a backlog from ever occurring again in Wisconsin, and that is supported by over 50 legislators, law enforcement, health professionals, advocates, and survivors alike, remains stalled in the Wisconsin State Assembly. While this legislation has passed the Senate unanimously by voice vote, it has failed to receive a public hearing in the Assembly, and as such has not made it to the floor for the vote it deserves. AB-214 works to create and codify timelines for the collection, submission, and storing of kits, honoring the dignity of survivors and providing further pathways to justice. It is vital that this legislation be passed to continue to help the survivors of sexual violence in our state, and I call on Speaker Vos and the Assembly Committee on Health to take up this vital legislation.

Wisconsin must do all that we can to support survivors of sexual assault and to prevent future occurrences of sexual assault. I am proud to continue fighting for survivors of past and future instances of sexual violence, and to stand with survivors for the essential rights that they deserve.”

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*Melissa Sargent is a State Representative in the Wisconsin Assembly, representing the 48<sup>th</sup> Assembly District, which covers the east and north sides of the city of Madison and the village of Maple Bluff*