



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Date: January 28, 2020

Contact: Representative Melissa Sargent

Email: Rep.Sargent@legis.wi.gov

Phone: (608)-266-0960

Rep. Sargent Calls for Passage of Bipartisan Legislation to Prevent Sexual Assault Kit Backlog

MADISON – Representative Melissa Sargent (D-Madison), released the following statement calling for the passage of [Assembly Bill 214](#), regarding the storage and processing of sexual assault kits:

“On April 16, 2019, a group of bipartisan legislators, including myself, joined with Attorney General Josh Kaul to introduce legislation that would prevent another backlog of untested sexual assault kits from occurring ever again in our state. This legislation—Assembly Bill 214— has 72 bipartisan co-sponsors (over 50% of all Wisconsin legislators, and a majority of State Assembly members), and the support of law enforcement, health professionals, community advocates, and survivors alike.

On September 19, 2019, the legislation received a public hearing in the Senate, where we heard about the importance of codifying these procedures into law to ensure the timely collection, submission, processing, and storage of sexual assault kits for the future. Codifying these procedures not only ensures that a backlog never occurs again, but it is a crucial step in supporting survivors of sexual violence and upholding their rights to a fair and just process. On October 3, 2019, the bill received an executive vote passing the Senate Committee unanimously, and was then passed by the Wisconsin State Senate via a voice vote on October 8th.

The support on this legislation is outstanding, and the impacts that this bill will have for our state once passed are even greater. Yet, Representative Joe Sanfelippo, Chairman of the Assembly Committee on Health where AB 214 remains stalled, continues to politicize this nonpartisan issue, and refuse to give the bill a public hearing in the Assembly. Despite widespread support and passage by the State Senate, and his [own promise to give AB 214 a hearing](#), Sanfelippo continues to question this vital legislation, as [shown in a constituent letter obtained by Attorney General Kaul](#).

While no piece of legislation can ever erase the trauma of sexual violence, failures to effectively and efficiently test kits, such as Wisconsin has seen in the past, should never be a barrier to justice. The testing of sexual assault kits is a first step to providing victims with affirmation and a path towards justice, and it is crucial that action be taken now to pass this legislation.

With over 50% of legislators as co-sponsors on Assembly Bill 214 and many others in support— regardless of if they have a “D” or “R” next to their name— there is no excuse for inaction. I call on Representative Sanfelippo and Assembly leadership to do the right thing for our state, and get AB 214 passed this session to show support for survivors of sexual violence.”

###

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