



Connecticut Department of Public Health

Testimony Presented Before the Public Safety and Security Committee

February 27, 2018

**Commissioner Raul Pino, M.D., M.P.H.
860-509-7101**

Senate Bill 17 - An Act Promoting Fairness In Access To Information, Support And Justice For Sexual Assault Victims

The Department of Public Health (DPH) supports Senate Bill 17, which would promote fairness in access to information, support and justice for victims of sexual assault. Thank you for the opportunity to testify on this important issue.

The Bureau of Justice Statistics estimates that about 32% of sexual assault crimes will be reported to the police (as opposed to about 62% of robberies and aggravated assault crimes), in less than 6% of these cases will arrests be made, and in less than 1% will an offender be convicted. DNA collection in these sexual assault cases can mean the difference between justice for the victim and prevention of further sexual assault crimes.

The purpose of the sexual assault evidence collection guidelines is to assist providers with the consistent and complete collection of sexual assault evidence, which is one part of a comprehensive medical forensic response to sexual assault patients. The collection of evidence should occur in a manner that is patient-centered, preserving patient autonomy and dignity throughout the process. It is important that a sexual assault counselor be contacted when the patient enters the medical facility, so that this counselor can help guide the patient through the process, help them to understand their rights and options and provide support and advocacy as they make their decisions. It is also important that the process be transparent so that the victim can be ensured access to the results obtained from their evidence collection kit in a timely manner. Further strengthening these protocols to include a bar code on each sample that is collected, and instituting tracking software, increases consistency and provides uniformity to evidence inventory, tracking and audit procedures. The changes proposed in this bill help provide reassurance and support to the victims of sexual violence, improve victim engagement to facilitate healing, and increase the potential for just resolutions to these cases. DPH supports promoting fairness in access to information, support, and justice for sexual assault victims in Connecticut.

Thank you for your consideration of this information. We encourage Committee members to reach out to DPH with any questions.

*Phone: (860) 509-7269,
410 Capitol Avenue - MS # 13GRE, P.O. Box 340308 Hartford, CT 06134
An Equal Opportunity Employer*