

**Testimony of Hazel Watts**  
**Survivor of Sexual Assault**  
**In Support of S.B. 17 *AN ACT PROMOTING FAIRNESS IN ACCESS TO INFORMATION,***  
***SUPPORT***  
***AND JUSTICE FOR SEXUAL ASSAULT VICTIMS***

**Public Safety and Security Committee**  
**Tuesday, February 27, 2018**

Good afternoon, Senator Larson, Senator Guglielmo, Representative Verrengia and members of the Public Safety and Security Committee.

Thank you for the opportunity to submit testimony today, I wish I could have been there in person to share with you, however my schedule does not permit. I would like to share with you my experience following a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam.

After being sexually assaulted by my husband while I slept in our marital bed I went to a local hospital and submitted to a Sexual Assault Forensic Exam. This was an invasive process that I went through alone. A sexual assault advocate was present after the kit had been completed by the doctor on staff that evening. I do not know who called the advocate but I am glad they did! My advocate accompanied me to the Police Department and even helped me to find a safe place to stay after knowing I could not return home since my husband's arrest was pending investigation. Initially, I felt the detective handling my case "had my back" I felt he was receptive and listened to what I had to say; I felt justice would be served. I would soon learn that justice would allude me based on the status of my relationship (statute 53a-70b sexual assault in a spousal or cohabitating relationship) and the lack of force or threat of force during the assault. I hope legislators will review this statute in the future, but today I will address victim notification.

I made many attempts both during the investigation and court proceedings (my husband was charged with interfering with 911 call) to find out what if any evidence was collected from my body. At first I was told they were waiting for the kit results, but after a few months I became convinced they were withholding. After that initial conversation all my calls went unanswered. I felt I was being ignored which made me feel nervous and angry, I couldn't understand why my calls were not returned. This created a very stressful situation for me, I felt ashamed and alone. My advocate and I were able to contact the detective and found out that the states attorney had put in a request for DNA from my husband for comparison. This gave me hope! I continued to call, after months with no response I even went to the police station hoping to speak to the detective in person, he was not available. When I finally spoke to him he told me "the kit came back with nothing." This was confusing because I was under the impression they had some evidence to compare since they were requiring my husband to submit a DNA sample.

Throughout the process I feel there was no clear communication between myself and the detective handling my case. On one occasion I even called the states attorney to try and get some answers. The states attorney did speak to me briefly. I received few details about what was going on with the case other than the very limited info provided in this testimony. I feel the police and

the states attorney failed me; I trusted them to do a job and they let me down in a way that makes it very difficult for me to trust that in the future I can call on them for help if needed.

My entire life is turned upside down, even now nearly a year later I am still picking up the pieces. The only validation I have that I was victimized has come from the hospital staff and my advocate. My experience has been devalued by the legal system. I feel disappointed and let down. Notifications during the process would have made me feel more supported and valued as a person.

Thank you for taking the time to read this. I hope that by sharing my story with you today you are able to enact change that will prevent other victims from being re-victimized by a system they should be able to trust will not only hold the offender responsible but also to give justice to those victims who come forward so bravely despite their fears and apprehensions.

Sincerely.

*Hazel watts*

Hazel Watts