



— Alberta Darling —

Wisconsin State Senator · District 8

Testimony before the Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety  
Senate Bill 94  
Thursday, February 25, 2021

Thank you Chair Wanggaard and committee members for holding a public hearing on Senate Bill 94. This important piece of legislation will create the Wisconsin Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System.

It's imperative for victims of a crime to have access to their information as it moves through the criminal justice system. Under the bill, the Wisconsin Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System will be a database for health care professionals, law enforcement, state crime laboratory personnel, and prosecutors to update information on the location and status of a sexual assault kit. The bill also enables victims to track the location and status of their kit. In order to accomplish this, the bill provides \$400,000 in funding to create the initial infrastructure for the database.

Senate Bill 94 enables survivors of assault to confidentially follow their sexual assault kit from collection through the justice process. In doing so, the Wisconsin Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System will bring accountability into the processing of sexual assault kits. It will also facilitate victims' ability to easily interact with the justice system as they seek results for their case. It's my hope that this accountability and transparency for victims will help to ensure another backlog does not rise in Wisconsin.

In passing Senate Bill 94, Wisconsin will be able to join the nationwide movement to ensure that victims of sexual assault have the right to obtain vital information about both the location of their kit and the status of their case. This is truly a bi-partisan issue that will ensure Wisconsin statute protects and empowers victims as well as prevents another backlog of cases.

This legislation passed the State Senate on a 33-0 vote last session. I hope to count on your support for Senate Bill 94.



MELISSA AGARD  
STATE SENATOR

**Senator Melissa Agard - Testimony in Support of SB 71 and SB 94**

Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety - February 25, 2021

Chairman Wanggaard and committee members, thank you for holding this public hearing today.

Thank you also to Representative Steffen and Senator Cowles' staff for being here in support of SB71. And thank you to Senator Darling for her testimony on SB 94.

I want to start by saying these bills are an example of what is possible in the Legislature. They are bipartisan pieces of legislation. And they are supported by different interest groups who are not always on the same side of every issue.

While it sometimes feels like we are destined to continue operating solely within our own parties - I'm hopeful that what we are taking up today can show all of our colleagues how we can be a better, more deliberative - and cooperative - body. The bills I am here to testify in support of, SB 71 and SB 94 are primarily aimed at three things:

- First, ensuring that justice is not delayed for survivors of sexual assault.
- Second, making sure that we do not have a backlog of untested sexual assault kits in Wisconsin ever again.
- And finally, creating a tracking system to provide victims of sexual assault access to information about the status of any sexual assault kit they have provided.

I have championed legislation regarding sexual assault kits and our state's backlog for three sessions. I have heard from victims and survivors of sexual assault. I carry their stories with me, and have promised them I will work tirelessly on their behalf to create a better system.

The bills before you today will ensure a procedure is in place that upholds survivors' dignity, choice, and the right to a fair and just process, protecting those who choose not to report at the time of an assault, or who change their minds. We know that sexual violence can be a hard conversation to have, and that reporting can be one of the most challenging steps for a sexual assault survivor to take. Survivors deserve the respect to report when they are ready – storing kits for the time frame specified in this legislation provides this respect by taking the traumatic nature of sexual assault into account.

Due to the hard work of a bipartisan group of legislators and expertise of advocates, law enforcement, health care providers, and Attorney General Josh Kaul - I am confident these bills are comprehensive in their approach to solving the issue of sexual assault kit storage, processing, and tracking in Wisconsin.

While no piece of legislation can ever erase the trauma of sexual violence, failures to effectively and efficiently collect, submit, and store kits should never be a barrier to justice. As elected officials, we must do all that we can to support survivors of sexual assault. We have that opportunity today.