



My name is Mary Faulkner, and I am the Criminal Justice Services Coordinator at PAVSA (Program for Aid to Victims of Sexual Assault). Located in Duluth, PAVSA's mission is the elimination of sexual violence in Southern Saint Louis County through supporting victims, educating the community, and advocating for change. Since 2016, I have coordinated the City of Duluth's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative. This project addressed previously untested sexual assault kits inventoried at Duluth Police Department and continues to implement promising practices for advocacy, forensic medicine, investigation, and prosecution.

I ask you to support House File 2034 to put in place a 90-day timeline for testing sexual assault kits at the state crime laboratory.

Over the past year, victim-survivors have had to wait up to eight months for the sexual assault kits to be tested by the state crime laboratory. Victim-survivors have shared with me how difficult this wait is, and as an advocate, there is little I can share with them about how long to expect to wait. They have told me that "their lives are on hold" waiting for their case to move forward. Some victim-survivors have expressed that they feel forgotten by law enforcement while they wait for their kit to be tested. The criminal justice system is often foreign and overwhelming to victim-survivors. By implementing a 90-day testing window, it would increase transparency and reinforce that their case and their safety is important.

In my experience, many victim-survivors report to law enforcement and undergo a forensic exam because they are concerned that their assailant has already harmed someone else and/or is likely to commit another assault. Reporting sexual assault to the police is an act of courage. Victim-survivors share their trauma and consent to an invasive exam that can last up to seven hours. They do this out of concern for their community. In return, victim-survivors deserve to know the timeline for kit testing and this timeline should reflect the serious nature of the crime.

Since 2018, Minnesota has passed a number of important, victim-centered reforms to the criminal sexual conduct response including timelines for how hospitals and law enforcement handle kits. A timeline for sexual assault kit testing is an important next step and the right thing to do for victim-survivors. Respectfully, I ask you to support House File 2034. Thank you for your time.