

MARY'S TESTIMONY

Good afternoon Chairman Jones and members of the Committee. I am Assistant Prosecuting Attorney Mary Morrow from the Wayne County Prosecutor's Office. Thank you for your leadership and the leadership of Representative Walsh and Senator Johnson in protecting sexual assault victims in our state. I am here today to ask you to support House Bill 5445 and SB 901, which would require all sexual assault kits released to law enforcement to be submitted for DNA analysis.

Collecting a sexual assault kit is a physically invasive examination that takes four to six hours. Every inch and orifice of a victim's body is combed or swabbed for evidence. Victims endure the exam because they believe that doing so will help to identify their assailant. And when the kit is tested, they can identify an unknown assailant, confirm the presence of a known suspect, connect the suspect to other crimes and exonerate the innocent. In short, testing a sexual assault kit can bring justice.

In Detroit alone there are over 11,000 kits believed to be untested. But this isn't just a "Detroit" problem. Currently, there are estimated to be 400,000 untested rape kits in property storage facilities throughout the country. Michigan is leading the nation in developing model protocols and legislation that would require sexual assault kits to be tested. Already, testing just 1,600 of the kits found in Detroit has led to the identification of nearly 350 suspects, 127 of whom are believed to be serial rapists. Suspects have been linked to crimes in 23 other states and the District of Columbia.

Already, seven serial rapists have been charged, convicted and are serving lengthy terms of incarceration as a result of testing. Reginald Holland, currently serving a life sentence, abducted and raped four women (that we know of) before he was identified through DNA analysis. Shelly Andre Brooks raped and murdered seven women.

On behalf of Wayne County Prosecutor Kym L. Worthy, and all victims of sexual assault, I respectfully request that you support this bill. With your support of House Bill 5445, we'll continue the groundbreaking work begun in Michigan by requiring that all sexual assault kits released to law enforcement be accounted for and submitted for testing. Thank you and I would be happy to answer any questions at this time.