

Testimony of the Maine Municipal Association

In Support For

LD 549- *An Act to Establish a Statewide Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Kit Tracking System and Update Certain Requirements Regarding Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Kits*

February 26, 2025

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Sen. Carney, Rep. Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Judiciary Committee, my name is Rebecca Graham, and I am submitting testimony in support of LD 549 at the direction of MMA's Legislative Policy Committee (LPC). Our LPC is made up of individuals from across Maine with municipal officials elected by their peers across Maine's 35 Senate districts representing communities with very different access to available enforcement resources and local capacity.

When this bill was presented last year, municipal officials queried their police chiefs to inquire about the burden of a proposed indefinite hold on this type of sensitive material, only to find that most law enforcement agencies already held on to sexual assault forensic examination kits indefinitely by way of local policy. This includes many agencies who receive a variety of kits turned over from a hospital even when the location of the assault or the victim may be unknown. This process places no additional burden on municipal police. However, the current process and lack of centralized data does impede the ability of victims to locate which agency is holding their kit or for an agency to assist a victim in finding another agency that might be in possession of their kit when they report to their local agency.

Officials are concerned about previous legislative directives for law enforcement data collection efforts that have not been appropriately funded to either collect data consistently or meaningfully and pose a significant burden on local agencies of all sizes. For this reason, they ask that any investment need identified by the Department of Public safety to build a centralized system be provided and adequate enough to make the administrative process easy, broadly accessible regardless of local system capacity, and fit to achieve its purpose. While this General Fund budget impact may be significant, without a system universally accessible for all 132 agencies with different platforms and access to technology, it will not achieve the intended policy outcome.