



**Testimony of Maine Public Health Association in Support of:
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**

Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary
State House, Room 438
Wednesday, February 26, 2025

Good afternoon, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary. My name is Rebecca Boulos. I am a resident of South Portland, and executive director of Maine Public Health Association. MPHA is in support of 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.”

MPHA is the state’s oldest, largest, and most diverse association for public health professionals. We represent more than 850 individual members and 70 organizations across the state. The mission of MPHA is to advance the health of all people and places in Maine. As a statewide nonprofit association, we advocate, act, and advise on critical public health challenges, aiming to improve the policies, systems, and environments that underlie health inequities – but which also have potential to improve health outcomes for all people in Maine. We are not tied to a national agenda, which means we are responsive to the needs of Maine’s communities, and we take that responsibility seriously.

The proposed bill would establish a tracking and inventory system for sexual assault forensic examination kits and require mandatory testing of all newly collected and backlogged kits. The bill would also require an anonymous portal on the tracking system where survivors can check information about their kits. Knowing how many kits the state has and establishing a transparent tracking system are crucial accountability measures for public health and safety.

According to a 2022 report, each year in Maine, an estimated 39,000 people will experience sexual assault, and 13,000 people will experience rape or attempted rape. The same report estimates 300,000 people in Maine will experience sexual assault at some point in their lifetime.¹ After a sexual assault, the survivor may choose to undergo a four-to-six-hour medical forensic examination to collect DNA evidence in what is commonly called a “rape kit.” Survivors who go through this exhaustive exam expect their rape kits to be tested. Most survivors, after leaving the hospital, are never contacted about the status of their rape kit, which can severely hamper recovery. A thorough, statewide inventory of kits will provide needed knowledge, transparency and accountability to survivors, and public health and safety professionals.

While the complete backlog of untested kits is unknown; in 2018, the estimate was 530 kits statewide.² It is clear that Maine needs legislative reform to adopt a statewide inventory and tracking system for sexual assault forensic examination kits, and to mandate testing of newly collected and backlogged kits. The state can build on the crime lab’s tracking system for two counties established using the STOPgrant funds and the \$2.5M federal funding Cumberland County received to achieve these reforms at the local level. Given the uncertainty of federal grants and whether this funding will be released to Cumberland County, the state legislature should act now to ensure reform is funded and expeditiously implemented.

We support the intentions of this bill and believe it is protective of public health. We respectfully request you vote LD 549 “Ought to Pass.” Thank you.

¹ Murray C, Dumont R & Shaler G. 2022. 2022 [Maine Crime Victimization Report: Informing public policy for safer communities](#). *Maine Statistical Analysis Center*. University of Southern Maine.

² Grey A, Arthur E, Tomenko V, Shaler G & Snell E. 2018. [Maine Sexual Assault Kit Study](#). *Maine Statistical Analysis Center*. University of Southern Maine.