



Re: 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

Dear Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and distinguished members of the Committee on Judiciary, my name is Gia Drew, and I am the Executive Director of EqualityMaine, which has been advocating on behalf of Maine's LGBTQ+ community since 1984. We urge you to support 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. This legislation is a critical step in meaningfully addressing the forensic examination kit backlog and longstanding processing issues.

LGBTQ+ people experience sexual assault at higher rates than the general population; for example, 46% of bisexual women have been raped, compared to 17% of heterosexual women. Almost half of all transgender people have been sexually assaulted at some point in their lives, and these rates are even higher for trans people of color and those who have done sex work, been homeless, or have (or had) a disability.¹ Yet each year in Maine, only about 20%-25% of forensic examination kits used to collect evidence of possible sexual assaults are returned to the Maine State Crime Lab for testing.² Additionally, results from the 2018 Maine Sexual Assault Kit Study showed "significant inconsistencies in how Maine agencies make decisions about the storage and analysis of SAKs [Sexual Assault Kits] and prosecutorial review of cases with SAKs."³

The establishment and maintenance of a tracking system for forensic examination kits is a cornerstone of public safety in our state. We urge you to vote "ought to pass" on LD 549 in order to protect Mainers' safety and rights and foster long-overdue transparency and accountability.

Thank you,

Gia Drew (she/her)
Executive Director, EqualityMaine

¹ 2024. US Trans Survey. August 13. <https://ustranssurvey.org/>.

² Terhune, John. 2024. "Prosecutors and Advocates Push Legislature for Rape Kit Reform." Press Herald. <https://www.pressherald.com/2024/01/29/prosecutors-and-advocates-push-legislature-for-rape-kit-reform>

³ https://www.mecasa.org/uploads/1/0/1/7/101776612/sak_study_final_report_2_21_19.pdf.