

January 29, 2024

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Salisbury, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety:

My name is Carlie Fischer and I am submitting testimony today as the Project Coordinator for a STOP grant that currently funds the Kit Tracking Pilot Project being conducted in two prosecutorial districts.

I am here today in support of **LD 2129, An Act to Establish a Statewide Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Kit Tracking System and Conduct an Inventory of Existing Kits in the Possession of Law Enforcement**. Thank you to Representative Geiger, Senator Beebe-Center, Representatives Ankeles, Crafts, Doudera, Gattine, Moriarty, Osher, and Stover, and Senator Vitelli.

Last summer, in partnership with the Maine State Police Crime Lab, the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Assault was awarded STOP grant funds to pilot a kit tracking system in two prosecutorial districts—Penobscot County and Kennebec County. As the Project Coordinator on this grant, I have had the pleasure of working with a dedicated, knowledgeable, and multidisciplinary group of systems partners to begin this important project, many of whom are present today.

The Kit Tracking Pilot Project has two primary objectives: 1) to implement a kit tracking system in those two districts and 2) to create a plan to inventory all kits currently in storage statewide. The Project Advisory Committee has spent numerous hours researching kit tracking systems used in other states, speaking with national proponents of kit tracking reform, and learning from other states who do this work well. We are in the final stages of system selection, and we anticipate system rollout in the spring. We will begin planning for an inventory over the summer.

The Kit Tracking Pilot Project is an important step towards a more survivor-centered response and improved investigation efficiency. However, it will conclude in September 2024—so LD 2129 is critical for ensuring the sustainability of improved kit tracking procedures.

I would also like to share that I have worked in sexual violence advocacy for six years. I have sat with many, many survivors during some of the most painful experiences of their lives. Often, I have joined them as they sat in hospital gowns trying to process what happened and what to do next.

Because I have had the privilege of hearing so many survivors' stories, I understand that both having a kit collected and reporting sexual violence to law enforcement are confusing, intimidating, and often traumatizing. I also know that we can make those processes easier. Other states have demonstrated that a kit tracking system helps demystify the process, foster a sense of empowerment among survivors, and send a clear message that we—their community members and the people tasked with helping them seek justice—care about their experience and wellbeing, because I believe that we do.

Thank you for your consideration. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.