



Jill C. Duson
Senator, District 27
Assistant Majority Leader

THE MAINE SENATE
132nd Legislature

3 State House Station
Augusta, Maine 04333

Testimony of Senate Assistant Majority Leader Jill C. Duson introducing
**LD 1816, An Act to Establish a Statewide Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Kit
Tracking System and Conduct an Inventory of Existing Forensic Examination Kits in the
Possession of Law Enforcement**
Before the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary

May 12, 2025

Chair Carney, Chair Kuhn and honorable members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary, my name is Jill Duson. I am proud to represent Senate District 27, which includes part of the City of Westbrook and City of Portland. I also have the honor of serving as the Senate Assistant Majority Leader. Thank you for the opportunity to present LD 1816, "An Act to Establish a Statewide Sexual Assault Forensic Examination Kit Tracking System and Conduct an Inventory of Existing Forensic Examination Kits in the Possession of Law Enforcement."

In December 2024, Cumberland County District Attorney Jackie Sartoris secured a grant from the federal government to test an estimated 500 backlogged sexual assault forensic examination kits that were in possession of law enforcement throughout the county. I celebrated this announcement as a means for closure and justice for survivors and accountability for those alleged to have committed these heinous crimes. When I read this news I thought, if this is a problem in Maine's most populous county, our 15 other counties may be experiencing this issue as well.

Maine has an unknown number of untested sexual assault forensic examination kits. It's my belief that **one** unaccounted test is too many when we're talking about such personal and impactful evidence.

LD 1816 directs the Department of Public Safety (DPS) to develop a statewide framework to track all completed kits regardless of whether the alleged offense related to the kit was reported to a law enforcement agency. The tracking system must also be continuously accessible to approved users. DPS would then submit a report providing an overview of the status of sexual assault forensic examination kits reported in the tracking system by January 2027. This bill requires DPS to adopt routine technical rules, including rules regarding participation in the tracking system, confidentiality and the operation of the tracking system.



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It also directs that a law enforcement agency that receives, maintains, stores or preserves sexual assault forensic examination kits must complete an inventory of all kits in its possession and report its findings to DPS. Then DPS must compile and present findings of the inventory by January 1, 2027 to the Legislature.

I understand this committee has heard legislation with similar intentions as the bill before you now. I am grateful to the sponsors of the similar bills for carrying this important conversation forward and underscoring the need for justice and accountability. The key contrast in this legislation is that it would not mandate the testing, taking a survivor-centered approach and not forcing survivors to relive their trauma.

If passed, LD 1816 would give us data on the number of reported and anonymous kits in storage across the state. It would also give us information about the time frame and quantity of untested, reported kits in the state in order to potentially make a future plan for testing and investigation of these cases (e.g. where would additional investigators need to be hired to investigate these cases.) It would allow criminal justice system partners to have easy access to information about critical evidence and have access to information about their kit without having to call law enforcement during business hours. It is also a more trauma-informed way to share information because survivors would be able choose when to access the information.

When unthinkable acts of sexual violence occurs, it's critical that victims and survivors seeking a forensic examination kit are able to not only access these services but also be sure that their kits will be tested and processed and that further action can and will be taken should the survivor choose. By coordinating a statewide system, we will send a message to survivors from Portland to Perham that we see them, we hear them and we trust them to seek justice how they choose, in accordance with the law.

As a survivor myself, I implore you to consider the complex trauma survivors experience and how empowering them to see through their case, following their lead.

I am grateful for your attention to this important bill and would be happy to answer any questions you may have or bring additional information back for the work session.

Thank you.