

May 11, 2025

Good morning, Senator Carney, Representative Kuhn, and Members of the Joint Standing Committee on Judiciary:

My name is Keri Kapaldo, and I am submitting testimony today as a Sexual Assault Forensic Examiner (SAFE) nurse and Program Coordinator for the St. Joseph Hospital SAFE Program. I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony in **support of 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.**

As a SAFE nurse, I have witnessed firsthand the critical need for transparency and accountability in the handling of sexual assault forensic evidence. LD 1816 is a vital step forward in ensuring that survivors have confidence their evidence is stored and managed responsibly, regardless of whether they choose to report to law enforcement.

The St. Joseph Hospital SAFE Program has participated in an 18-month pilot program for kit tracking, which has provided invaluable insight into how a statewide system can improve communication between medical providers, law enforcement, and survivors. The ability for survivors to anonymously and securely track their kits empowers them with information and promotes trust in both the healthcare and criminal justice systems.

LD 1816 goes beyond just tracking future kits—it also mandates an inventory of all existing kits currently held by law enforcement agencies. This inventory is critical for assessing the scope of unprocessed evidence in Maine and for ensuring that all kits are stored according to current statutory requirements, including the recent extension of retention periods to 20 years. Understanding where these kits are and their status is a fundamental first step in addressing longstanding concerns about untracked evidence and unintentional mishandling.

Importantly, LD 1816 focuses solely on tracking and inventory—not mandatory testing—allowing Maine to build the necessary infrastructure for a transparent and accountable system while respecting survivor autonomy. This legislation aligns with national best practices and ensures that our state remains committed to improving its response to sexual violence in a trauma-informed and survivor-centered manner.

I thank the Committee for your attention to this critical issue and urge you to vote **Ought to Pass** on LD 1816. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

Respectfully,



Keri Kapaldo, BSN, RN, SANE-A, ME-SAFE-A, ME-SAFE-P