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January 23, 2017

City Councilor Pat Davis  
1 Civic Plaza Northwest  
P.O. Box 1293  
Albuquerque, NM 87103

Dear Councilor Davis,

The Joyful Heart Foundation writes to support your Council Bill No. R-16-143, the Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Testing Resolution, which would establish for the Albuquerque Police Department timelines and practices for submitting and testing sexual assault evidence kits. This bill also enforces accountability by requiring annual reports.

Every two minutes, someone is sexually assaulted in the United States. In order to preserve crucial evidence of the crime, victims undergo an invasive and emotionally draining forensic medical exam, lasting anywhere from four to six hours. This process collects DNA evidence left behind by the attacker and can be critical to moving forward with identifying and prosecuting an offender and providing a path to healing for the survivor. Yet, too often rape kits are left untested, stored in facilities and left on shelves.

Reforms like this resolution are critical to ending the backlog of untested rape kits. In 2016, the New Mexico State Auditor investigated the backlog in New Mexico and reported a total of **5,440 untested rape kits across the state**. In Albuquerque alone, 3,948 kits were discovered to be untested, **meaning that over 70 percent of the untested rape kits in the entire state reside in Albuquerque**. Every one of these kits represents a survivor who suffered a deeply personal crime, and it is time that local and state governments undertake legislative reforms to end the backlog, prevent a future backlog, and give survivors the information they need to heal.

We urge the Finance and Government Operations Committee to approve this resolution and send it to the full City Council for a vote. We commend the City of Albuquerque in taking these first steps towards providing an evidence-based and survivor-focused approach to ending the backlog and bringing opportunities for justice to sexual assault survivors in New Mexico.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ilse Knecht". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a prominent initial "I".

Ilse Knecht  
Director, Policy & Advocacy