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Chief Executive Officer

April 12, 2017

Representative Victoria Neave  
P.O. Box 2910  
Austin, TX 78768

Dear Representative Neave,

The Joyful Heart Foundation strongly supports House Bill 1729, which creates a voluntary contribution fund dedicated to forensic testing of DNA evidence gathered from sex crimes. Funding is critical to testing all rape kits and ensuring a path toward healing and justice for all sexual assault survivors in Texas.

In the aftermath of a sexual assault, a survivor may opt to submit to a lengthy and invasive forensic exam to collect DNA evidence in a rape kit. Survivors—and the general public—expect these rape kits to be used to apprehend offenders. Yet, far too often, these kits are not submitted to crime labs for testing.

Since 2011, Texas has been a leader in eliminating the backlog of untested rape kits. State legislators enacted S.B. 1636, which required law enforcement agencies to send all newly collected kits to a crime lab for testing within 30 days of collection. The law also directed the lab to test the kits as soon as is feasible and mandated the submission of untested rape kits. As of January 2017, local law enforcement agencies have sent 19,051 such kits to the state lab.

H.B. 1729 would bring attention to the dire need to fund comprehensive reform by allowing Texans to donate to an evidence testing grant program when applying for or renewing a driver's license. This grant program would only fund the testing of forensic evidence obtained from survivors of sexual assault or other sex crimes. This bill provides with Texans an opportunity to demonstrate their support for the expeditious testing of all rape kits.

When tested, rape kit evidence can identify unknown assailants, reveal serial offenders, and exonerate the wrongfully convicted. Testing rape kits also saves communities millions of dollars. According to a study from the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education at Case Western Reserve University, testing just 4,300 previously unsubmitted kits in Cleveland has saved the community \$38.7 million dollars, or \$8,893 per tested sexual assault kit.

The Joyful Heart Foundation thanks you for your leadership in this issue. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to continue allocating resources through appropriations and all necessary funding mechanisms to ensure that all rape kits are tested in Texas.

Sincerely,

Ilse Knecht  
Director, Policy & Advocacy



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HEART  
FOUNDATION

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April 12, 2017

Senator Sylvia R. Garcia  
P.O. Box 12068  
Capitol Station  
Austin, TX 78711

Dear Senator Garcia,

The Joyful Heart Foundation strongly supports Senate Bill 1163, which creates a voluntary contribution fund dedicated to forensic testing of DNA evidence gathered from sex crimes. Funding is critical to testing all rape kits and ensuring a path toward healing and justice for all sexual assault survivors in Texas.

In the aftermath of a sexual assault, a survivor may opt to submit to a lengthy and invasive forensic exam to collect DNA evidence in a rape kit. Survivors—and the general public—expect these rape kits to be used to apprehend offenders. Yet, far too often, these kits are not submitted to crime labs for testing.

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S.B. 1163 will bring attention to the dire need to fund comprehensive reform by allowing Texans to donate to an evidence testing grant program when applying for or renewing a driver's license. This grant program would only fund the testing of forensic evidence obtained from survivors of sexual assault or other sex crimes. This bill provides with Texans an opportunity to demonstrate their support for the expeditious testing of all rape kits.

When tested, rape kit evidence can identify unknown assailants, reveal serial offenders, and exonerate the wrongfully convicted. Testing rape kits also saves communities millions of dollars. According to a study from the Begun Center for Violence Prevention Research and Education at Case Western Reserve University, testing just 4,300 previously unsubmitted kits in Cleveland has saved the community \$38.7 million dollars, or \$8,893 per tested sexual assault kit.

The Joyful Heart Foundation thanks you for your leadership in this issue. We look forward to working with you and your colleagues to continue allocating resources through appropriations and all necessary funding mechanisms to ensure that all rape kits are tested in Texas.

Sincerely,

Ilse Knecht  
Director, Policy & Advocacy