



March 15, 2021
Representative Meg Froelich
Room 307, Colorado State Capitol
Denver, CO 80203-1784

Honorable Rep. Froelich,

The Joyful Heart Foundation strongly supports House Bill 21-1143, a bill that ensures that survivors have meaningful rights and access to critical information that can help them heal. Twenty-four states and Washington D.C. grant survivors such rights.

Every 73 seconds, someone is sexually assaulted in the United States. In the immediate aftermath of a sexual assault, a victim may choose to undergo a medical forensic examination to collect DNA evidence left behind in the assault. A doctor or nurse will conduct the examination, which can last between four and six hours. The examiner collects and preserves this evidence in a sexual assault evidence kit, often referred to as a rape kit.

Most survivors, after leaving the hospital, are never contacted about the status of their rape kit. Our [2016 research on victim notification](#) found that, for survivors who want to know about their case, not having access to such information can severely hamper recovery. Survivors in our study strongly asserted that information about their case “belongs” to them and limiting access to information is “unacceptable and misguided.” Access to information about the status and location of their rape kits can help survivors counter the loss of self-determination and control that is often at the core of a sexual assault experience.

H.B. 1143 grants survivors key rights, including the right to be notified that evidence has been submitted for testing, the law enforcement agency has received the results of the analysis, and of intended destruction 60 days prior, as well as the right to file an objection to the destruction. The bill also requires law enforcement agencies to maintain medical evidence until the statute of limitations has run the crime and for an additional 10 years if the victim objects to its destruction. Taken together, these rights ensure that all sexual assault survivors can obtain information and make decisions about their cases.

The Joyful Heart Foundation thanks you for your leadership and efforts to bring justice and healing to all sexual assault survivors in Colorado and stands ready to assist you in passing this bill.

Sincerely,

Ilse Knecht

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