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January 27, 2020

Senator Andrew Koenig
Room 331 State Capitol
201 West Capitol Avenue
Jefferson City, MO 65101

Dear Senator Koenig,

The Joyful Heart Foundation strongly supports Senate Bill 569, which creates submission timelines for rape kits and establishes a state-wide rape kit tracking system.

Every 92 seconds, someone is sexually assaulted in the United States. In the immediate aftermath, a victim may choose to undergo a medical forensic examination—which can take four to six hours—to collect DNA evidence in what is commonly called a rape kit. Missouri law currently does not require tracking rape kits or timelines for submission, which have contributed to the backlog. Every year in Missouri, more than 2700 rapes are reported to law enforcement. Without submission timelines and a tracking system, survivors are left waiting for justice. S.B. 569 seeks to change it.

Establishing statewide policies regarding rape kit submission with S.B. 569 will set standard operating procedures across the state. By requiring every sexual assault kit to be submitted and tested, Missouri can send a powerful message to survivors that they—and their cases—matter. Testing every kit also sends a message to perpetrators that law enforcement will employ every available tool to apprehend and prosecute them.

Joyful Heart suggests mandating a timeline for hospitals to notify law enforcement about the collected kit. Without a mandated timeline, there is risk of miscommunication in the rape handling process, potentially leading to kits languishing in hospital storage. In future legislation, we suggest adding laboratory turnaround time, following the federal best practice of 30 days. Though in practice state labs may have an internal deadline, it is always best to have procedures and deadlines mandated by law that outlines each agency's responsibilities in the chain of command to prevent future backlogs.

S.B. 569 would require Missouri Department of Public Safety to establish a statewide Sexual Assault Kit Tracking System. The electronic system would monitor the location and status of the kits throughout the criminal justice process, increasing transparency and accountability. As our survivor-focused research shows, giving survivors a choice about how to receive information about their case can help counter the loss of self-determination and control at the core of the sexual assault experience. By building a rape kit tracking system with a portal for survivors to check the status of their kit at their convenience, Missouri can give survivors the control they need to heal on

their own terms.

We urge you to enact this important legislation. The Joyful Heart Foundation thanks you for your efforts on this issue. We stand ready to assist you in creating safer communities and offering a path to healing and justice to all sexual assault survivors in Missouri.

With Gratitude,

Ilse Knecht

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ilse Knecht". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Director, Policy and Advocacy
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