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February 24, 2021

Representative Cyndi Munson
Room 545, State Capitol Building
Oklahoma City, OK 73105

Honorable Rep. Munson,

The Joyful Heart Foundation strongly supports [House Bill 2546](#), a bill that ensures that survivors have meaningful rights and access to critical information that can help them heal. Twenty-five 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 in 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. 2546 grants survivors key rights, including the right to request and receive the results and status of the analysis of the sexual assault forensic evidence of the victim, the right to consult with a sexual assault victims’ advocate, and the right to free forensic exam and medication. 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 efforts to bring justice and healing to all sexual assault survivors in Oklahoma and stands ready to assist you in passing this bill.

Sincerely,

Ilse Knecht

Director, Policy and Advocacy
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