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Senator Bryan Townsend
1st Floor, Legislative Hall,
411 Legislative Avenue,
Dover, DE 19901

Dear Senator Bryan Townsend,

The Joyful Heart Foundation strongly supports Senate Bill 17, a bill that, among other provisions, ensures that sexual assault survivors have the right to know the status and location of their sexual assault evidence collection kits.

Every 68 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, as SB17 proposes, can help survivors counter the loss of self-determination and control that is often at the core of a sexual assault experience.

The Joyful Heart Foundation thanks you for your efforts and leadership to bring a path to justice and healing to all sexual assault survivors in Delaware. We stand ready to assist you in enacting this necessary reform.

Sincerely,

Mateo Cello

Policy Associate
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