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July 9, 2025

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The Honorable Kathy Hochul  
Governor of New York State  
NYS State Capitol Building  
Albany, NY 12224

Honorable Governor Hochul,

The [Joyful Heart Foundation](https://www.joyfulheartfoundation.org/) strongly supports A.1970-A( Paulin)/S.5225-A\_(Gounardes), which would include hospitals in the statewide rape kit tracking system under development by the Division of Criminal Justice Services (DCJS) pursuant to Chapter 31 of the Laws of 2023. That law included a carve out for hospitals that will cause kit handling issues, and in turn, unnecessary hardship and uncertainty for sexual assault victims. We urge you to sign this bill as soon as possible to ensure that hospitals are added to the tracking system and the goals of the 2023 legislation are fully effectuated.

Most states mandate clear timelines for rape kit handling, including timelines for turning kits over to law enforcement, which prevents kits from languishing in hospitals. Under New York's law, law enforcement must send rape kits to a crime lab within 10 days. However, hospitals are not required to notify law enforcement when a kit is collected, nor is there a deadline for law enforcement to retrieve kits from medical facilities. Without hospital participation in the rape kit tracking system, rape kits can fall through the cracks, get stuck at hospital storage rooms, and create a new untested rape kit backlog. Recently, the NYPD (who strongly supported this bill) uncovered a significant issue with the handling of rape kits in New York City, revealing that potentially hundreds of Sexual Offense Evidence Collection Kits authorized for release to law enforcement remain in hospital storage. Anecdotal evidence suggests this problem extends statewide.

By including hospitals in the tracking system, this bill would ensure transparency and accountability across the process, allowing survivors to track their kits from initial collection to final disposition. Specifically, the bill would also require hospitals to notify law enforcement within 48 hours, and law enforcement to pick up rape kits within three days of notification. These changes will ensure that rape kits are not misplaced or left unaddressed and ensure that sexual assault victims are afforded the dignity they deserve.

We are counting on your leadership to address the lack of transparency in rape kit tracking and limits in survivors' access to

information about their kits, and urge swift approval of A.1970-A/S.5225-A. By enacting this bill, New York will prioritize bringing offenders to justice and supporting survivors in their journey towards healing. The Joyful Heart Foundation thanks you for your leadership on this important issue and stands ready to assist you in enacting these necessary reforms.

With gratitude,

Ilse Knecht

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Ilse Knecht". The script is fluid and cursive, with the first letters of "Ilse" and "Knecht" being capitalized and prominent.

Director, Policy and Advocacy  
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