

February 5th, 2024

Dear Chair Kropf, Vice Chairs Andersen and Wallan, and members of the House Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for your time and consideration. I am writing in support of House Bill 4123.

My background is in emergency department nursing, and I now work on the Medical Forensic Team with Providence Hospitals, serving the greater Portland area. Before I came to live and work in Oregon, I was a nurse in Maine, which shares many of the same challenges as our state. I can testify to the type of care that patients receive when well-trained Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners are unavailable. As a new graduate nurse, I was once handed a SAFE Kit to perform on a patient with no further support beyond “read the instructions in the box.” At the time I was untrained in medical-forensic principles, for example trauma-informed care and evidence chain of custody. A SANE has at least 40 didactic hours and 16 clinical skills hours in training above and beyond the training of an emergency department nurse. I didn’t know which medications might be appropriate for the patient, which community resources were available to them, and so much more.

During a travel nursing contract at a critical access hospital in Maine, I cared for a sexual assault patient we were unable to serve. I was instructed to discharge my patient and send them to a larger medical facility over an hour north. I have no idea whether that patient made it there safely. This gap in services added hours onto an already arduous ordeal for that patient in the immediate aftermath of an assault.

Oregon can do better than Maine. Oregon is poised to become a leader in serving this population. The Sexual Assault Task Force website is where I first became aware of a grant that could help me obtain forensic training. Now I am a new-to-specialty Forensic Nurse Examiner, and while I am currently serving in a metropolitan area, I hope to one day serve in rural communities as well. This year I will seek OR-SANE certification through the Sexual Assault Task Force. I look forward to submitting my cases for review and receiving feedback on the care I have provided. This feedback will be invaluable to my practice moving forward.

Sexual assault, strangulation, and domestic violence patients face so many obstacles. A positive, holistic medical encounter can set them on the road to recovery. Lack of care or inadequate care can result in negative health outcomes including revictimization, unintended pregnancy, sexually transmitted disease acquisition, and untreated injury. Survivors of assault deserve the best care we know how to deliver, and you can help that happen by supporting House Bill 4123.

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