



## **House Bill 1268 - Public Safety - Rape Kit Testing Grant Fund - Established**

### **Position: *Support***

#### **Bill Summary**

HB 1268 establishes the Rape Kit Testing Grant Fund as a special, non-lapsing fund, and requires the Department of State Police to administer the Fund and establish and publish procedures for the distribution of funding to law enforcement agencies. The bill requires the State Treasurer to hold the Fund, and the Comptroller to account for the Fund.

#### **MHA Position**

The Maryland Hospital Association has served as a member of the Maryland Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Policy & Funding Committee (SAEK Committee) since its inception. Last year, the committee applied for and received a federal grant from the Sexual Assault Kit Initiative that will allow Maryland to conduct a statewide inventory of sexual assault evidence kits (SAEKs), test unsubmitted kits – those in police custody that have never been submitted to a crime lab for DNA testing<sup>i</sup> -- and provide victim services.<sup>ii</sup>

HB 1268 would establish a fund specifically to help law enforcement agencies cover the cost of testing SAEKs. Such a fund would demonstrate the state's commitment to sexual assault survivors by ensuring that law enforcement agencies are able to test every eligible kit.

Serial sexual offenders often also commit other, less serious crimes<sup>iii</sup>. So, testing more kits means that more DNA profiles can be uploaded into the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), which increases the odds of catching repeat offenders and solving cold cases<sup>iv</sup>. States across the country have observed this phenomenon: In Detroit, Michigan, the DNA profiles pulled from SAEKs matched profiles in 40 other states<sup>v</sup>.

Maryland's hospitals support efforts like this that encourage the apprehension of serial offenders and provide law enforcement agencies the resources they need to ensure that all eligible SAEKs can be tested.

For these reasons, we urge a *favorable report* on HB 1268.

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<sup>i</sup> Bureau of Justice Assistance. Sexual Assault Kit Initiative. *The National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative's Impact on Solving Cases*. n.d. Presented at the February 6, 2019 meeting of the Maryland Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Policy & Funding Committee.

<sup>ii</sup> Maryland Office of the Attorney General.(May 1, 2008). Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Policy and Funding Committee, Governor's Office of Crime Control and Prevention Submit Application for SAKI Grant: Grant Would be Used to Test and Track Untested Kits; Aid in the Identification of Perpetrators [Press Release]. Retrieved from <http://www.marylandattorneygeneral.gov/Press/2018/050118.pdf>

<sup>iii</sup> Ibid.,i

<sup>iv</sup> Ibid.

<sup>v</sup> Ibid.