

TESTIMONY OF DANIELLE TUDOR-MARCH 25TH, 2015

SENATE BILL 563

SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

CHAIR (Senator) Prozanski

Vice-Chair (Senator) Kruse

Mr. Chairman and members of the committee:

My name is Danielle Tudor and I write to you today in regards to SB 563. Unfortunately I am out of town, or I would be there to testify personally. I would like to thank the committee members for reading this testimony in lieu of my verbal statement.

The backlog of untested rape kits has recently taken center stage in our county. It is believed that over 400,000 rape kits sit untested in police evidence warehouses across the country. In Multnomah county alone, it is believed that the number of untested rape kits is somewhere in the 5-figure range. It is a problem that affects every state and city. Some cities and states have already addressed this issue and the backlog no longer remains, however, Oregon is not one of them. We are just beginning to address this issue.

SB 563 is the beginning for Oregon. It mandates law enforcement through-out the state to turn in untested rape kit numbers to the Attorney General. As a victim of a violent sexual assault, rape kit information became crucial in the conviction of Richard Gillmore, Portland's Jogger Rapist. Had the rape kits of all of his victims not been processed, it would have severely compromised the case.

Behind every sexual assault rape kit, there is a human being who has been harmed in an unimaginable way. The courage and strength it takes an individual to seek help and undergo a rape kit examination should not be rewarded with a humiliating exam that goes untested. If we are truly interested in public safety and getting rapists behind bars where they belong, then every rape kit needs to be processed.

The numbers from different cities around the country who have processed their backlog are impressive. For example, Memphis, Tennessee backlog has already produced 162 new investigations, 22 indictments, and identified 16 people previously convicted of rape. In Detroit, Michigan 1,600 rape kits have been tested so far, and it has led to identifying 100 serial rapists—with 10 of them already convicted.

An amendment has been proposed for SB 563 (Proposed Amendments to Senate Bill 563, SECTION 2) that proposes guidelines for the destruction of untested rape kits each year and the reporting of those activities, including giving victims the option to receive their untested rape kit in lieu of it being destroyed. This amendment conflicts with the main theme of SB 563 which is to eventually ensure that all rape kits are tested. I also have serious concerns that contacting victims years, or even decades after

their rape kit was originally done could be a traumatic trigger for some who are still dealing with the aftereffects of their attack. Some of those victims will never want to receive that call. I believe this amendment should be removed from SB 563 and referred to a legislative workgroup for further review, evaluation and input by all interested parties, i.e., law enforcement representatives, victim advocates, attorney general's office, etc. The seriousness of the ideas proposed in this amendment need this type of attention as they will have far reaching effects on a lot of people within the law enforcement community, victim communities, and even the district attorney's community.

In conclusion, I sincerely ask that the members of this committee will show their support for victims state-wide by voting for SB 563, but not before removing all of SECTION 2 of the Proposed Amendments to Senate Bill 563 in its entirety.