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To: Chair Prozanski, Chair Barker, and Members of the Senate and House Judiciary Committees
From: Carla C. Piluso, State Representative, House District 50
RE: SAFE Kit Backlog and JSAFE Task Force—Update

For the record my name is Carla Piluso, and I proudly represent House District 50, the great city of Gresham. I am also the chair of the Joint Task Force on Testing Sexual Assault Forensic Evidence Kits.

I am pleased that we will be discussing some good news today, but I want to start off by reminding you of where we were just a few years ago. Across the state, there was a backlog of nearly 5,000 sexual assault forensic evidence kits. Each of those kits represented an individual: someone who, on the worst day of their life, having been victim to a terrible crime, agreed to undergo a long and invasive procedure to collect forensic evidence of that crime. They did so because they trusted that it would help authorities catch the person who hurt them, and prevent it from happening again.

But for nearly 5,000 Oregonians, their kit simply sat on a shelf—some of them for years or decades. This happened because at that time we were not prioritizing these victims, and we were not prioritizing the safety of future victims.

I am extremely proud to have worked with my colleagues on Senate Bill 1571, also known as Melissa's Law. That law directed the Oregon State Police and local law enforcement to make testing these kits a priority, and it appropriated funds to make that happen.

We now know that Melissa's Law has been getting results. By the end of the first year, the backlog had shrunk by 78%—and by the end of this year, it is projected to be close to zero. This is an incredible accomplishment, and I want to thank my colleagues in the legislature, my fellow members of the Joint SAFE Kit Task Force, the Oregon State Police, and all the advocates and survivors who have been so dedicated to fixing a broken system.

Going forward, the JSAFE Task Force will continue to monitor kit testing. We will also be overseeing the implementation of a tracking system to make sure a backlog never builds up again.

Thank you for listening and for your interest in this important topic.

Sincerely,

Carla C. Piluso
State Representative, House District 50