



MARYLAND CHIEFS OF POLICE ASSOCIATION

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U.S. Department of Justice
Office of Justice Programs
Bureau of Justice Assistance

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John Newnan
Johns Hopkins University
Columbia, MD

Re: National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative

Dear Review Committee:

The Maryland Chiefs of Police Association (MCPA) is pleased to express its support and commitment to the State of Maryland's Sexual Assault Kit Initiative grant application. The MCPA is dedicated to leading and supporting the efforts of police chiefs and sworn law enforcement executives in advancing the science and art of police services and, along with the Maryland Sheriffs' Association, is recognized as the voice of law enforcement advocacy on behalf of local law enforcement in Maryland.

In 2016, our members participated in a survey conducted by the Governor's Office of Crime, Control and Prevention on behalf of the Maryland Office of the Attorney General (OAG). The results of that survey, issued in a 2017 report by the OAG, identified over 3700 untested sexual assault evidence kits (SAEKs) throughout the State of Maryland. Supplemental information recently provided by law enforcement agencies suggests that the total number of untested kits may now be much higher. We believe that victims of sexual assault deserve access to justice and perpetrators of these crimes should be held accountable.

In 2017, the Maryland legislature passed Senate Bill 734, creating the Maryland SAEK Policy and Funding Committee. Under the leadership of our State Attorney General, the SAEK Policy and Funding Committee is charged with developing and disseminating best practices information regarding: 1) the testing and retention of sexual assault evidence collection kits; 2) coordination

Mission Statement

"To unite law enforcement executives in delivering innovative, high-quality police services."

between State agencies, victim services providers, local law enforcement, and local sexual assault response teams; 3) payment for sexual assault evidence collection kits; 4) increasing the availability of sexual assault evidence collection exams for alleged victims of sexual assault; 5) reducing the shortage of forensic nurse examiners; and 6) increasing the availability of information to sexual assault victims regarding criminal prosecutions of sexual assault crimes, civil law remedies available to victims of sexual assault, sexual assault evidence collection kits, and victims' rights. The MCPA and several of its members have representatives on the Committee.

We understand that the SAEK Policy and Funding Committee is seeking grant funding through the National Sexual Assault Kit Initiative to begin addressing the state's backlog of untested kits, create a statewide SAEK tracking system, and expand supportive services for victims of sexual assault.

The MCPA commits to working with the OAG and SAEK Policy and Funding Committee and lending our collective expertise and resources to ensure the successful execution of these grant-funded activities. Agencies with untested kits will work diligently with Committee members and grant-funded positions to accurately and timely inventory untested SAEKs and identify any kits that should be tested. We also support the creation of a statewide tracking system to improve coordination between stakeholders, help agencies better prioritize SAEK testing, and increase transparency of SAEK processing and results.

As we have seen in other jurisdictions throughout the country, the consequences of failing to test SAEKs can have a devastating impact on public safety and trust in law enforcement. The MCPA is confident that Maryland can build upon its recent SAEK policy reforms and serve as an example to other states looking to effectively prosecute perpetrators and support survivors of sexual assault.

Thank you for your time and consideration. Please feel free to contact our Executive Director, John Newnan at 410-516-9873 if you have any questions.

Sincerely,



Gary L. Gardner

President
Maryland Chiefs of Police Association, Inc.