

Good Afternoon all! Thank you to the Senate Committee for convening a hearing to address the Statewide Tracking system in Pennsylvania. My name is LaQuisha S. Anthony and I am survivor. On a daily basis, I actively work to eradicate and dismantle the existence and impact of sexual violence within our society...primarily across the commonwealth and the Tri-State area. I work tirelessly at advocating for survivors and providing prevention and education services at WOAR- Philadelphia Center Against Sexual Violence, which is the only rape crisis center in Philadelphia and community healing through V.O.I.C.E., a sexual abuse survivors network where I serve as the founder. I am combating sexual violence at every turn. Today I'm here to speak with you regarding the impact that a statewide tracking system would have on survivors like myself.

We currently live in a society that has advanced technology and many things are available at our law firm fingertips. We access news by scrolling and going to a website or social media platforms where there is usually a time stamp or there are events and updates that come through in minutes, communication with people across the world via email, skype, live streaming and more where we can see when that person is communicating with us, via a time stamp of when the email was sent, or when the skype or live took place and we can actively communicate with each other in real time in a manner of minutes or even seconds, We have access to food delivery through modes like door dash, uber eats and other apps that give us step by step tracking of the preparation of our food, to when the driver picks up to when it's delivered to our door step. We have access to shopping for all of our needs via online sites like amazon where we can track our items from the time it was shipped until it arrives. We even can see or are told when it's lost or delayed. The United States post office has even created a system where you receive a picture of the mail that will be delivered to your home and

the day it should arrive. Can you imagine that in 2021 that we don't have the ability to track rape kits especially when we know the history of back logs that our great state once possessed. Kudos to those who worked hard to end the back log but can you imagine the amount of survivors who had the courage to endure an invasive examine that touches, resembles, and reminds them of one of the most freighting, confusing, terror filled experience of their lives to never know where the evidence that was taken from inside of them ended up? Especially in a day in age where rape kits are being used as evidence in non sexual assault unrelated related cases like in San Fransisco.

When the average person hears the word rape kit what comes to mind is victims of sexual assault, there is usually no thought about ever having to obtain one, despite Sexual assault being extremely prevalent in our society. Rape kits are not usually the topic at the dinner table or the group chat. If you don't work in the field of sexual violence you probably rarely hear about outside of tv and movies, well that was at least my experience prior to being raped. Leaving limited knowledge for the average person around the process. I possessed little knowledge of what it was but never knew the guidelines or the importance of 72 hour window that is suggested you should obtain the exam by. I didn't know that dna evidence could be obtained from the crime scene. I thought it was only collected from your body, I didn't know it could be collected from clothes, and other personal belongings. I also didn't know that obtaining a kit didn't require reporting to the police. Keep in mind that Sexual Assault is one of the most under reported crimes. I dint know that other forms of evidence could be collected after the 72 hour window. I didn't know what would happen to the evidence once it was collected and fear continued to creep in. I didn't know that once DNA is collected, that there was a protocol for how the evidence is handled and used in an investigation or that the evidence

would be provided to law enforcement, who may send it to a crime lab. I didn't know that the lab would analyze the material and develop DNA profiles that are unique to a specific person. Or that the lab works with law enforcement officials to compare these profiles to the DNA of potential suspects.

I didn't know that if the perpetrator is unknown, they may compare the DNA profile against a large database run by the FBI called CODIS, the Combined DNA Index System. In order to identify suspects that the we as survivors don't know or isn't familiar with. I didn't know where it would be stored. I didn't know who else had access to it nor did I know if I would be notified or the collection.

What I did know was the things I heard, that people would get kits done and never hear anything back. That it sat on a shelf somewhere and people called over and over to find it's whereabouts but would say that the kit didn't come back yet. That it often times became the perpetrators word against the victim.

What I know was that I had to do the hardest thing ever and that was share this with someone.

As we sit hear to discuss this process, I wonder how many of you know what it feels like to be sexually assaulted, raped molested or experience any form of sexual violence or knows what the 72 hour window looks or even remotely feels like? While, I pose this question and wonder, of course, the trauma informed version of myself does not want you to answer that, but it's very hard to make decisions on something based off limited knowledge therefore, I'm here to give you a glimpse of what the 72 hour window, a survivor has to collect the best means of evidence is like.

Many people talk about what they will do in traumatic experiences but if you know anything about the study of the brain that we rarely know how we would react when faced with a traumatic experience. Fight, flight, freeze and fawn are the responses one may have. Some may believe that the response is immediate and temporary but for many survivors it is a perpetual state. A state that impacts the decision you make from that point forward.

The decision to get a Sexual Assault forensic exam or rape kit is one of the decisions one may grapple with. Sexual Assault, rape molestation and any other forms of violence that requires a Rape kit for evidence collection is one of the most violating experiences one may ever encounter. It has been described by many survivors as one of the most grueling nightmares that they wouldn't wish on their worst enemy. It's an experience that makes you feel dirty, washing the experience away through bathing, showering and scrubbing your body of the filth you just endured is the primary yet natural response.

I remember feeling the dirtiest that I ever felt in my entire life, all I wanted was to erase any residue of what occurred in that small, dark smelly dorm room on that fall day. My 19 year old self couldn't even comprehend what just occurred nor the methods or steps I needed to take next to navigate this experience, let alone to preserve evidence. I somehow escaped the room with a send off of him boldly saying he would call me, as if this was an experience I enjoyed and would look forward to hearing from him again. I made my way across the grass patches on campus back to my all girls dorm where I shared space with 2 other freshman. I reached my room and found it quiet, still, isolated for once, the halls were quiet, the time of day eluded me, I now found myself in a fog or daze. Nothing seemed real, I wasn't truly coherent, as if I was drugged. I was not drugged but this foggy space of trying to comprehend what

just happened left me stumbling through life as I knew it. I shut the dorm room door, collapsed on the floor sobbing uncontrollably pleading with God to help me. I didn't know what helped looked like though. All I knew was that something happened and I felt horrible. Grappling with the notion that this was somehow was my fault, the thought what if I did things different, if I would've fought more and didn't freeze in the moment, if I never decided to wait in his room to hang out, If I somehow showed him that I wanted this. Did he somehow not hear me say no I'm good, did he somehow speak a different language that "no, I'm good" meant that I was ok with it. That despite being from the same community he didn't understand the slang No, I'm good means no thank you, rejection of or ridicule for offered good or service or that he didn't feel me pushing his hard muscle bound body off of me, that he missed the tears that streamed down my face. I was violated to the core, A piece of who I was died that night, a piece of me was taken and I had no idea what would happen to me. I had no certainty of anything. All I knew is that I needed the feeling to go away, this whole experience to go away.

There wasn't much I was certain of and obtaining a rape kit became one the things that held more uncertainty especially because I didn't have access to the knowledge of what happened next, I didn't have access to track the very pieces of myself that would be collected and shipped away. For someone who was violated and had no control, having a sense of knowledge would have been a breath of fresh air. You may say why would being able to track the very condense that was gathered from the inside of you give survivors control. Well knowledge of where the contents that was gathered from inside of you is can reduce the amount of anxiety that come with the unknown, it would ease the PTSD because I'm not reminded of the helpless feeling the original experience you just endured, it would reduce the amount of depression bc hope is present because there is a sense of movement happening before your eyes and at your finger

tips. That in the middle of the night the one step you took toward gaining autonomy and making a choice you could go back to review even if there is no change its stands as a monument of evidence to the one thing you did do. A small thing but yet a powerful thing to have access. I wouldn't have to make several phone calls and to verbally remind my body of what I endured. I can silently sit in the comfort of my own home or on my cell phone while traveling take a peak at the progress.

Having this system in place not only help survivors with their own internal process it will resolve victims face when trying to access information about their evidence and allow all parties to have a central location eliminating the inconsistencies that persist between different counties regarding the notification process. This step toward empowering survivor and improving the impact of how systems impact a survivors journey. You can make that difference for us all!