



**Testimony on S.95
House Human Services
April 12, 2017**

**Auburn Watersong
Policy Director**

Thank you for the opportunity to speak to you about S.95 related to the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) program. Recent national news has highlighted the need for improved systems to process and manage the sexual assault forensic exam kits – also known as “Rape Kits”. Although the Vermont Forensic Lab does not have kits sitting untested for longer than 6 months (as many other states have), Vermont does have a challenge when it comes to the tracking and documentation of these kits. You will hear more about this from the SANE Program Coordinator, Sarah Robinson.

In recent years in Vermont, the number of certified Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners has grown. The SANE Program is housed at the Vermont Network. We have learned that changes are needed in order ensure that the SANE program continues to grow, and we need to do a better job in helping victims of sexual assault get the care and attention they need and deserve.

S.95 will ensure that the SANE program has a stable funding source, the certification process is more relevant and nimble, the provision of SANE care is more accessible to victims, and challenges regarding the tracking, documentation, and delivery of kits are adequately assessed and remedied.

For these reasons, we strongly support the passage of S.95 as written.

SUMMARY OF S.95

S. 95 revises the purpose and procedures of the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Board

- The **purpose of the SANE board** was to regulate sexual assault nurse examiners.
 - The new purpose is to advise the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners Program
- The **composition of the board** now includes a “health care provider”.
- A section was added related to what the **SANE Board shall advise** the SANE Program:
 - statewide program priorities;
 - training and educational requirements;
 - a standardized sexual assault protocol and kit to be used by all physicians and hospitals in this State when providing forensic examinations of victims of alleged sexual offenses; and
 - statewide policy development related to sexual assault nurse examiner program.
- Funding for the SANE Program Clinical Coordinator position is either through the Vermont Center for Crime Victim Services or through other identified state funding options .



- The responsibilities of the Clinical Coordinator is expanded to include coordinating and managing a system for ensuring best practices within the SANE program as they apply to the certification of sexual assault nurse examiners.

S.95 requires an **MOU to ensure** that all acute care hospitals to provide patients with care from a paid employee who is also a certified Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner or has **access** to a shared regional staffing pool that includes certified Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners.

S.95 creates the **Sexual Assault Evidence Kit Study Committee** for the purpose of conducting a comprehensive examination of issues related to sexual assault evidence kits including tracking, documentation, transportation and delivery. Membership includes:

- one current member of the House of Representatives
- one current member of the Senate;
- the Director of the Vermont Forensic Lab or designee;
- the Executive Director of the Vermont Center for Crime Victims Services or designee;
- the Commissioner of Health or designee;
- a representative of Vermont Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners (SANE) program
- a representative of the county special investigative units appointed by the Executive Director of the State's Attorneys and Sheriffs; and
- a law enforcement professional appointed by Commissioner of Public Safety