



State of Rhode Island  
Office of the General Treasurer

**James A. Diossa**  
General Treasurer

5 March 2024

The Honorable Robert E. Craven, Sr.  
Chair, House Judiciary Committee

The Honorable Members of the House Judiciary Committee

**RE:** 2024 H-7449, *Ac Act Relating to Criminal Procedure – Criminal Injuries Compensation*

Chair Craven:

I write in strong support of 2024 H-7449, introduced by Representative McEntee at my request. This bill would permit victims of sexual assault to submit a medical forensic examination to the Crime Victim Compensation Program (the “CVCP”) to establish eligibility for program funds.

Administered by the Office of the General Treasurer, the CVCP helps thousands of innocent victims allay the economic cost of crime, whether it be medical expenses, the cost of physical relocation, or lost earnings. Over the past four years, the CVCP has helped over 1,300 individuals, and impacted thousands across our state.

Generally, an individual is eligible if they have been the victim of a violent criminal act that results in injury or death. *See* R.I. Gen. Laws § 12-25-22(a). A victim must also report the crime to law enforcement officials within just 15 days of the incident. *See id.* Once they satisfy the initial reporting requirement, a victim has up to three years to make a claim and may qualify for up to \$25,000. *See id.*

However, many sexual assault victims never report the crime to the police, and therefore cannot receive compensation under the CVCP. Statistics published by the United States Department of Justice indicate that over two-thirds of sexual assaults are never even reported to the police in the first instance. Twenty percent of victims did not complete a police report because they feared retaliation.

But it is considerably more likely that a victim will seek medical attention. This bill would permit victims of sexual assault to submit *either* a police report or the results of a medical forensic examination indicating they have been the victim of a sex crime.

In Rhode Island, Women & Infants Hospital – the primary referral and treatment site for female survivors of sexual assault – employs Sexual Assault Nurse Examiners. These healthcare providers are registered nurses who are *specifically trained* to conduct medical forensic examinations for sexual assault patients. *See Women & Infants, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE) Program*, accessed Mar. 5, 2024, at <https://www.womenandinfants.org/services/emergency-care/sexual-assault>. These examinations are a routine element of care for adult sexual assault victims. Consequently, victims who are currently excluded from the Program because they did not report a crime to the police would be able to qualify if they were examined by a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner while seeking medical care.

Importantly, medical forensic exams *are* a qualifying expense under the CVCP. As such, victims currently are – and would be – reimbursed for the cost of the exam once their claim is approved.

Currently, at least ten other states permit sexual assault victims to submit a form of medical documentation instead of a police report, including California, Connecticut, Georgia, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, New Mexico, Michigan, Missouri, and Oregon.

I urge this Committee to support our sexual assault survivors and recommend passage of this bill.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to be 'JD' or similar initials, enclosed within a circular flourish.

James A. Diossa  
General Treasurer

cc:           The Honorable K. Joseph Shekarchi  
              The Honorable Carol McEntee