



Tom Barrett  
Mayor

Bevan K. Baker, CHE  
Commissioner of Health

**Health Department**

Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

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October 22, 2015

Senator Van H. Wanggaard and Members  
State Senate Committee on Judiciary and Public Safety  
Wisconsin State Senate  
State Capitol  
2 East Main Street  
Madison, Wisconsin 53703

RE: SB 323

Dear Chairman Wanggaard and Committee Members:

The Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault wishes to express its support for SB 323, a proposal to ensure that survivors across the state of Wisconsin are given the right to a trained advocate throughout all stages of the medical and criminal justice process.

Created by the City of Milwaukee Common Council, the Commission has worked with those affected by domestic violence and sexual assault as well as the agencies that serve them for over thirty years. The Commission's duties include, but are not limited to, monitoring and promoting legislation, increasing community awareness, and designing policies, protocols, and trainings for public and private entities. This multidisciplinary team is charged with the responsibility to increase safety for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault while holding perpetrators accountable.

Too often, we hear victims detail their overwhelming and disorienting experiences in the criminal justice system. Victims are asked to undertake the daunting task of navigating an unfamiliar and complex network of processes, proceedings, agencies, and services, all while coping with the trauma of an assault. Survivors, particularly victims of human trafficking, receive poor treatment from others, including those who are present to respond to them. Indeed, half of all rape victims report secondary victimization due to victim blaming by police. Survivors with these damaging experiences are less likely to be subject to a successful investigation or seek medical and mental health services, thereby resulting in long-term health consequences. This legislation, however, provides an opportunity to confront these issues and reaffirm our commitment to ensuring dignity, fairness, and respect for crime victims.

As a research-based best practice and model policy of the International Association of Chiefs of Police, victim accompaniment is regarded as an important tool in establishing a victim-centered approach to investigation and prosecution. Well-supported victims have better outcomes by improving their participation in the criminal justice system, increasing the amount and quality of information reported,

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connecting them with supportive services, and most importantly, facilitating their recovery. These results bolster our chance to hold perpetrators accountable and make our communities safer. Survivors themselves attest to the value of trained advocates as a much-needed source of comfort and security in their time of need, capable of imparting the information and options that victims deserve to make informed decisions along their healing journey. Members of law enforcement have shared that advocates can assume the demands of giving ongoing support to a survivor, which alleviates the pressure on detectives alone to address survivors' numerous needs and allows them to focus on conducting an investigation.

The Milwaukee community is currently reaping the benefits of this practice with the introduction of a victim accompaniment protocol, thanks to a partnership between the Milwaukee County District Attorney's Office, Milwaukee Police Department's Sensitive Crimes Unit, and Aurora's Sexual Assault Treatment Center. The Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault hopes that access to this same level of support will be afforded to all survivors across the state of Wisconsin.

Thank you for your time and consideration. If you would like additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at [eperkin@milwaukee.gov](mailto:eperkin@milwaukee.gov) or by phone at (414) 286-2997.

Respectfully,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Erin M. Perkins". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a large initial "E" and "P".

Erin M. Perkins  
Coordinator  
Milwaukee Commission on Domestic Violence and Sexual Assault

CC: Senator Leah Vukmir  
Senator Frank Lasee  
Senator Fred Risser  
Senator Lena Taylor