

Testimony on behalf of the
New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault
on A2597,
Clarifying that a victim of sexual assault is not
responsible for the costs of a forensic exam
Assembly Judiciary Committee
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Thank you to Chairwoman Greenstein and the members of the Assembly Judiciary committee for hearing this bill today. The New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault supports the passage of A 2597, a bill that clarifies that sexual assault victims are not responsible for any costs of forensic sexual assault exams or related services.

The federal Violence Against Women Act requires that states who receive STOP formula funding under the Violence Against Women Act incur “the full out-of-pocket costs of forensic medical exams...for victims of sexual assault.”¹ Furthermore, states may not require law enforcement cooperation on behalf of a victim of sexual assault to receive a free forensic exam. New Jersey receives over \$3 million in STOP formula funding and thus, this requirement applies to New Jersey.

It would however, be helpful to state advocacy for the legislature to clarify this requirement in state law. NJCASA’s member programs provide services to over 3000 survivors of sexual assault a year and accompany survivors to the hospital for forensic exams as part of the Sexual Assault Response Team response. While most survivors are not presented with bills from a hospital for charges associated with a forensic exam, when they are, it can be very difficult for the survivor. I recently spoke with a survivor who received a bill from the hospital several months after the forensic kit was performed. Before agreeing to the kit, she asked the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner and the confidential sexual violence advocate if there would be any charges resulting from the exam and was repeatedly told no. When she received a bill, she was devastated and angry. The issue was quickly resolved by the SART coordinator, but we believe that clarity in state law would help prevent these incidents.

On behalf of the 22 NJCASA member sexual violence programs and survivors of sexual violence throughout New Jersey, we strongly urge you to approve A2597. Thank you.

¹ 42 U.S.C. § 3796gg-4