



Thank you for the opportunity to speak in support of House Bill 390, which would require the testing of Sexual Assault Examination kits (SAE kits), also known as rape kits, when there is human trafficking involvement. I serve as a representative for the Ohio Chapter of the International Association of Forensic Nurses (IAFN).

The IAFN is an international organization of forensic nurses working around the world alongside other professionals who support and complement the work of forensic nursing. The IAFN consists of over 6,000 members with over 200 located in Ohio. Forensic Nurses can be identified as registered or advanced practice nurses who have received education and training, to provide specialized care for patients who are experiencing acute and long-term health consequences associated with victimization or violence, and/or have unmet evidentiary needs relative to having been victimized or accused of victimization. It is the position of the IAFN that forensic nurses have a professional and ethical responsibility to serve, advocate for and empower patients, families, and the communities they serve^{1, 2, 3}. Forensic nurses have the opportunity to improve a patient's overall long-term health outcomes that result from violence. Forensic nurses are uniquely positioned in intersecting systems such as healthcare, community and legal environments for early identification of patients at risk of victimization or perpetration of violence¹. A primary goal of forensic nursing programs is to raise public awareness that violence is a public health issue that impacts healthcare systems and communities worldwide. To that end, forensic nurses promote interventions that prevent or confront the causes of violence and strengthen the health care response to those affected by violence¹.

Sexual violence is a health care issue that destroys the quality of life of victims, in societies and communities worldwide. The aftermath of violence creates complex health issues requiring the dedicated efforts of professionals. Nursing professionals are ethically bound to promote the health, welfare, and safety of all people^{2, 3}. Using the science of nursing,



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forensic science and public health, forensic nurses are uniquely qualified to assess, formulate a nursing diagnosis, treat, monitor, educate, evaluate, and intervene for persons of all ages affected by violence, minimizing the short and long-term effects of violence¹. Healthy People 2010 supports health care services, which focus on both treatment and prevention for all members of the global community⁴.

The IAFN states that human trafficking is a type of modern-day slavery, a significant global public health issue, and the fastest growing criminal enterprise in the world. Virtually every country in the world is impacted by human trafficking crimes. Emergency nurses, healthcare providers, and community partners face the difficult challenge of doing their very best to prevent human trafficking whenever possible, protect and support human trafficking victims, and hold accountable the perpetrators of this dangerous crimes.

When a forensic nurse examiner completes a SAE kit in Ohio, those kits are required by law to be tested for the following crimes: rape, murder, voluntary or involuntary manslaughter, vehicular homicide, sexual battery, and gross sexual imposition. However, current law does not require that SAE kits be collected or tested in suspected human trafficking crimes. This is why the IAFN Ohio Chapter supports House Bill 390. Human trafficking is the only high-level sex offense that does not require law enforcement to submit SAE kits for testing. This is concerning due to the historical issues related to the backlog shelving of SAE kits across the country. In 2014, Ohio sought to rectify this issue by implementing House Bill 316, which required the testing of all SAE kits, except for in human trafficking cases. House Bill 390 does not require that human trafficking victims have a kit obtained. Rather, if an individual chooses to seek medical attention and request a sexual assault medical forensic examination, their kit will be tested. Simply put, if we require kits to be submitted for testing in rape cases, we should do the same for human trafficking. In Ohio, both human trafficking and rape are first degree felony offenses - both human trafficking and rape are sexual oriented offenses - in fact, human trafficking even carries a higher sentencing penalty than some rape cases. Yet our law does not require that law enforcement tests SAE kits in human trafficking cases. HB 390 would make that necessary correction.

All victims of human trafficking should be offered a medical forensic examination, and be provided a medical diagnosis and treatment from a forensic nurse examiner. This will support the short- and long-term physical and mental health of human trafficking victims and potentially help identify their assailants. HB 390 will allow for us to better protect against human trafficking while continuing to respect the rights of victims during the SAE collection process. In Ohio, a medical forensic exam will continue to be voluntary, and the



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victim will be able to consent to evidence collection and terminate the process at any time while remaining anonymous. The Ohio Chapter of the International Association of Forensic Nurses is thankful to the sponsors, Representative Lanese and Representative John, and we are grateful to be able to express our support for the passage of House Bill 390. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

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