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Senate votes to strengthen care for sexual assault survivors

HB 2375: Requires health care representation on local response teams

SALEM – When sexual assault survivors seek treatment, they should have access to care that is compassionate and takes their unique trauma into consideration.

[House Bill 2375](#) – which passed the Senate on a 28-0 vote today – requires that sexual assault response teams which oversee sexual assault response to include at least one sexual assault nurse examiner or hospital representative. By ensuring this expertise is represented on the teams statewide, local hospitals can provide stronger assistance and support to sexual assault survivors.

“By providing the voice of nurses or others who have hospital experience on the sexual assault response teams, we can make sure that survivors are getting the compassionate care they need that is sensitive to the unique trauma that they have suffered,” said Sen. Rob Wagner (D-Lake Oswego), a member of the Attorney General’s Sexual Assault Task Force. “It will lead the way to better care and greater support for survivors.”

In Oregon, the district attorneys in each county are required to organize sexual assault response teams to set the protocols for sexual assault response in their counties. Each team must include representation from a prosecution-based victim assistance program, a sexual assault forensic examiner, law enforcement and a non-profit agency providing support services to sexual assault survivors. The bill will expand that makeup to include someone with experience in a hospital setting to help guide protocols.

Sexual assault survivors often are scared and intimidated to seek care. This bill is designed to make health care providers more approachable and comforting to help people who have suffered the traumas of sexual assault.

“Immediate access to comprehensive medical-forensic care following a sexual assault mitigates long-term trauma and negative health consequences and supports survivors on their path toward healing and health,” said Nicole Broder, with the Oregon Attorney General’s Sexual Assault Task Force. “We know that the most effective sexual assault response occurs through a chain of coordinated multidisciplinary efforts. Holding hospitals to their part in that chain and giving them the support to succeed, even when resources are scarce, is an important step to ensure that survivors have access to consistently expert-level care.”

House Bill 2375 now goes to Gov. Kate Brown for her signature.

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