

# United States Senate

WASHINGTON, DC 20510

October 4, 2016

The Honorable Brad Schimel  
Attorney General  
State of Wisconsin  
State Capitol 114 East  
Madison, WI 53702

Dear Attorney General Schimel:

I write to express my concerns with Wisconsin's sexual assault kit backlog. It has been more than a year since your department received \$4 million from the U.S. Department of Justice (USDOJ) and the New York County District Attorney's Office to support reducing the backlog and related investigative work, research and public education. Recent press reports indicate, however, that there has yet to be any progress from your office in the actual testing of the estimated 6,000 sexual assault kits in our state. This is unacceptable and the people of Wisconsin deserve better.


At the federal level, I have worked to be a strong partner in addressing the sexual assault kit backlog. As a member of the Senate Appropriations Committee—which is responsible for funding federal grants that help state sexual assault kit testing programs—I have helped make more federal funding available to enhance testing efforts. In addition, when *USA Today* first uncovered the nationwide backlog of 70,000 kits last July, I wrote to Attorney General Lynch urging her to bring forward federal resources to help state and local law enforcement address this unacceptable situation. I was pleased to see her, together with Manhattan District Attorney Cyrus Vance, Jr., step forward with \$79 million in funds to assist in this critical effort. As I wrote to the Attorney General then, “[i]t is critical that victims of sexual assault across the country receive the swift and thorough justice they deserve...” Unfortunately, in Wisconsin, those victims, their families and their communities appear little closer to obtaining justice than they were last July.

I appreciate that surveying the hundreds of local law enforcement agencies in our state, which have widely varying levels of staff and resources, is a challenging task. Furthermore, dealing with evidence of potential crimes must of course be a thorough and deliberate undertaking. However, I am also very troubled by reports that, more than a year after receiving this infusion of outside resources, none of the backlog in our state has been reduced.

The USDOJ recently awarded the state another \$1.1 million to process these kits. This is a federal investment in Wisconsin that I strongly support so I want to know that this funding from Washington is being met with a strong commitment from you to get the job done on the backlog.

I know that we both share the goal of seeing these kits tested and providing survivors of sexual assault and their families with the justice and closure that they deserve. I ask that you approach this effort with a renewed sense of urgency, ensuring that limited federal resources are used to accomplish our goal of ending this backlog as swiftly as possible.

Sincerely,



Tammy Baldwin  
United States Senator