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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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## **Bi-Partisan Legislation Proposed to Create Equal Protection for Sexual Assault Victims**

Legislation would modify the Sexual Assault Protection Order (SAPO)

Representative Roger Goodman (D-45<sup>th</sup>) and Senator Joe Fain (R-47<sup>th</sup>) are sponsoring legislation to amend the Sexual Assault Protection Order (SAPO) to create equal protection for victims of sexual assault in Washington. A SAPO is a civil order issued by the court that requires the perpetrator to stay away from the victim and locations they frequent, and to have no further direct or indirect contact with the victim. HB 1384, and its companion in the Senate, SB 5256, propose modifications to the duration and burden of proof on reissuance elements of the statute. The modifications would bring SAPOs in line with other Washington protection orders that are granted to victims of domestic violence, stalking, or harassment.

“Obtaining a SAPO currently presents significant barriers for sexual assault victims to successfully receive adequate protection,” said Mary Ellen Stone, Executive Director for King County Sexual Assault Resource Center. “Modifying the duration and the re-issuance process of the statute will mirror other orders of protection in Washington State and increase critical protections for sexual assault victims.”

A SAPO is often the only protection that a victim can obtain if the offender is not charged with a crime. This is significant because in a five-year review of cases filed in King County, criminal charges were filed in fewer than 25% of reported cases at the time when a victim sought a SAPO in King County. Unlike other protection orders, SAPOs currently can only be issued for up to two years. Two years is often an inadequate amount of time for the SAPO because of the risk posed and the fear of harm remains after that period of protection expires.

As the current language stands, if a victim still needs protection after two years, she must go back to court to reapply for the order and appear in court to present her case again to get the order re-issued. The SAPO process is difficult — in King County Superior Court, fewer than half of the SAPO petitions filed over the past five years resulted in the entry of a protection order. And when a SAPO is effective in keeping the respondent away from the petitioner, it is not unusual for this to be an argument against reissuance, rather than acknowledging the effectiveness of the SAPO.

The bill has passed in both the House and State Senate at different times in the past two years, and this year it has broad bi-partisan support. Other sponsors include Reps. Sherry Appleton (D-23<sup>rd</sup>), Beth Doglio (D-22<sup>nd</sup>), Dan Griffey (R-35<sup>th</sup>), Laurie Jinkins (D-27<sup>th</sup>), Ruth Kagi (D-32<sup>nd</sup>), Christine Kilduff (D-28<sup>th</sup>), Kristine Lytton (D-40<sup>th</sup>), Timm Ormsby (D-3<sup>rd</sup>), Tana Senn, (D-41<sup>st</sup>), Melanie Stambaugh (R-25<sup>th</sup>), Derek Stanford (D-1<sup>st</sup>) and Gael Tarleton (D-36<sup>th</sup>). In the State Senate, sponsors include Sens. Maralyn Chase (D-32<sup>nd</sup>), Jeannie Darneille (D-27<sup>th</sup>), David Frockt (D-46<sup>th</sup>), Sam Hunt (D-22<sup>nd</sup>), Patty Kuderer (D-48<sup>th</sup>), Mark Miloscia (R-30<sup>th</sup>), Gary Palumbo (D-1<sup>st</sup>), Jamie Pedersen (D-43<sup>rd</sup>) and Hans Zeiger (R-25<sup>th</sup>).

The House Judiciary committee will hear testimony on the proposed SAPO legislation at 10am on Tuesday, January 24, 2017 in Hearing Room A in the John L. O'Brien Building in Olympia, WA.



[King County Sexual Assault Resource Center \(KCSARC\)](#) founded in 1976, is a non-profit organization that ensures all people affected by sexual violence and abuse get the treatment they need and the advocacy they deserve. KCSARC is at the forefront of change, guiding public policy development and delivering research-based education to create safer environments for everyone.

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