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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

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Bi-Partisan Bill to Create Equal Protection for Sexual Assault Victims Unanimously Passes Senate Committee

7-0 Vote by Senate Law and Justice Committee on Sexual Assault Protection Order (SAPO) Bill

OLYMPIA, Washington – A bill to create equal protection for victims of sexual assault in Washington, sailed through the Senate Law and Justice Committee today by a unanimous vote, 7-0. Senate Bill 5256 is sponsored by Sen. Joe Fain, (R-47th) with broad bi-partisan support. A companion bill in the House passed by a 12-1 vote in the House Judiciary Committee on February 2nd, 2017. Senate Bill 5256 now goes to the Senate Rules Committee.

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. SB 5256 and its companion in the House, HB 1384, 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.

“We are thrilled that committee in both the House and the Senate have overwhelmingly passed this important legislation,” said Mary Ellen Stone, Executive Director for King County Sexual Assault Resource Center (KCSARC). “There’s no reason victims of sexual assault should be singled out to have to return to court every two years to get a sexual assault protection order reissued. We are now hoping that the bills can move forward successfully.”

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.

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

[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.