

April 6, 2017

FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Mary Ellen Stone, Executive Director KCSARC

mstone@kcsarc.org, 425.282.0354

House of Representatives Passes Bill to Increase Protections for Sexual Assault Victims

Senate Bill 5256 Now Moves to Governor Inslee's Desk

OLYMPIA, Washington - The House of Representatives passed legislation to create equal protection for victims of sexual assault in the state of Washington, approving changes in the Sexual Assault Protection Order (SAPO) by a vote of 75 - 22. Senate Bill 5256, sponsored by Senator Joe Fain, (R-47th), now goes to Governor Inslee's desk, where it's expected to be signed into law. The Republican-controlled Senate passed the measure by a vote of 43-6 last month.

"Current legal protections for victims of sexual assault do not reach as many people as they should," said Sen. Fain. "Protection orders are incredibly effective especially in the absence of other legal charges, but obtaining them can be difficult. Reducing barriers to critical protections will help keep more people safe."

"We must do all we can to spare victims and survivors of sexual assault the further trauma of having to face their assailants repeatedly," said Rep. Roger Goodman, (D-45th), who sponsored a companion bill in the House. "I'm so pleased we were finally able to pass this important law to give needed protection to victims."

The bill allows courts to grant protection orders for a fixed period, even permanently, instead of what's been a current maximum of two years. It also reduces burdens to renew existing orders. These changes will make SAPOs consistent with protections available to domestic violence, stalking, and harassment victims.

"We are appreciative of the efforts of Senator Fain and Representative Goodman, along with Senator Jamie Pedersen, and Representatives Jay Rodne and Laurie Jenkins, to get this critical piece of legislation passed this year," said Mary Ellen Stone, Executive Director of the King County Sexual Assault Resource Center. "This new law offers greater protection to victims of sexual assault, and relieves some of their burden by allowing judges to decide how long a SAPO should be in place, rather than force victims back into court every two years."

Once a SAPO is in place, it requires the respondent to stay away from the victim and place(s) that the victim frequents (home, work, school, etc.), and to have no further direct or indirect contact with the victim. Violation of a protection order can result in criminal charges against the attacker.

In 2015, Washington state programs served approximately 13,000 victims of sexual assault, with about 5,000 of those victims in King County.

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[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.