

PUBLIC COMMENTS

SB 476

HOUSE COMMITTEE ON COUNTY AFFAIRS

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Hearing Date: May 4, 2021 10:30 AM - or upon final adjourn./recess or bill referral if permission granted

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Michael Crumrine, Sergeant

Self - Sergeant with the Austin Police Department

Austin, TX

Texas has made significant strides in the last few years to improve the Criminal justice Response to sexual abuse survivors. SB476 is another step in the right direction. Taking lessons we have learned from years of investigating Child Abuse cases, and applying those lessons into practices which work well with adult sexual assault cases is not only the correct thing to do, but it is smart legislation. As a 34 plus year police veteran who sits on the Governors Sexual Assault Survivors Task Force, I fully support this bill. I have worked sexual abuse cases involving both adult and child victims for well over a decade. I have seen first-hand how using a multi-disciplinary approach to sexual assault cases is a best practice for victims.

It ensures that all the stake holders involved in these investigations has an equal seat at the table and will work collaboratively in the victims' best interest. My experience has shown that, studies have shown that, and clearly we have learned this lesson in cases of sexual violence involving children. Not only do I know this to be true but the states own findings support this. In October of 2020, the State Auditor office released a report titled "Investigation and Prosecution Processes for reported Sexual Assault in Texas." This report shows the positive impact and improved success of cases when they are worked in a multi-disciplinary fashion, and recommends that adult cases of sexual violence be worked in the same manner already established for child abuse case.

Requiring counties to have a SARRT team who statutorily have to work together will not only improve the quality of the investigation on the front end but also throughout the criminal justice process and into the courtroom. Ultimately, helping to hold more offenders accountable and providing better outcomes for victims. I have had the opportunity to work with SARRT teams in the past and I can say that when all of the stakeholders, advocates, law enforcement, medical professionals, and prosecution work together, the victims are treated better, the quality of the investigation improves and the cases presented in court are a superior product. I strongly support this bill.

Should any member of the committee or the legislation like to discuss this further, or hear my direct testimony, I am happy to assist.

Rick Bacon, Commissioner

Tom Green County

San Angelo, TX

While I understand the concerns of victims of sexual assault making it mandatory for all counties to create sexual assault response teams places an undo burden on small county budgets. Please amend the bill to exempt counties with populations less than 250,000. This allows small counties to establish teams that are cost effective and will not place an undo burden on the county or Sherriff's department. Many rural counties do not have hospitals and victims go to area hospitals. In rural counties it is more cost effective to create a response team for the hospital/clinic instead of having every county have a team.