

Rep Ann Wagner (MO-02) Statement for the Record – Sept 28 Judiciary Markup

I'd like to thank Chairman Jordan, Ranking Member Nadler, Chairman Biggs, and Ranking Member Jackson-Lee for bringing this important piece of legislation up for consideration.

In 2019, the Government Accountability Office found that backlogged DNA analysis requests at state and local crime labs increased by 85% over the last decade, and the most recent data estimates that 200,000 sexual assault kits across the country remain untested.

My bill, the Debbie Smith Act of 2023, directly addresses this unacceptable issue. This bill will reauthorize the Debbie Smith DNA Backlog Elimination Program from FY2024 through FY2029.

This vital program, originally established by Congress in 2004, provides support to state and local law enforcement in all 50 states to analyze DNA samples from rape and sexual assault kits, improve law enforcement's timely collection and analysis of DNA evidence, audit untested DNA evidence from sexual assault cases, and enhance state and local prosecutors' capacity to address this horrific backlog.

Since its inception, this program has been incredibly effective. Funding from this program provided to state crime labs has directly resulted in 1.79 million DNA cases processed, over 600,000 crime scene DNA profiles uploaded to the Combined DNA Index System (CODIS), over 3.5 million offender DNA profiles uploaded to CODIS, and over 300,000 matches made in CODIS.

Those 300,000 matches represent 56% of all hits made in CODIS. Over half of all the successful matches in CODIS are because of this program, and it is set to expire. We cannot let that happen.

Victims of rape and sexual assault deserve justice, and their attackers deserve to be identified, arrested, and prosecuted to the fullest extent of the law.

This legislation enjoys the support of the Fraternal Order of Police, the National District Attorneys Association, the Major Cities Chiefs Association, the Major Counties Sheriffs Association, the Consortium of Forensic Science Organizations, Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN), the National Association to End Sexual Violence, Joyful Heart, and Debbie Smith herself.

This program has received bipartisan, bicameral support throughout its existence, and I look forward to continuing that legacy with this markup and an eventual floor vote.

I'd again like to thank the Chairman and Ranking Member as well as the Committee staff who has worked with my office on this bill.

There is still far more we must do to eliminate the rape kit backlog, but reauthorizing this program is the most important first step.

Thank you.