

Letter of Support from State Prosecutors

January 2025

To Whom It May Concern:

We are both prosecutors in the Iowa Department of Justice. We prosecute sex crimes both in the district court and on appeal from all 99 counties across Iowa. Many of our cases come from rural counties where local prosecutors lack the experience and training necessary to prosecute these complex cases, and we are brought in as subject-matter experts to aid county attorneys.

We wholeheartedly support the proposal put forward by the SAFE Center of Iowa to establish a center to standardize care and improve multidisciplinary response to sex crimes perpetrated against adult victims.

Over the last 20 years, there has been a statewide and national movement to improve sexual assault response for child victims through establishing Child Protection Centers or Child Advocacy Centers (“CPCs” or “CACs”). At these child-focused centers, child victims are able to speak with trained professionals, undergo medical examinations, and seek therapy and social services to begin healing as survivors of crime. SAFE Center of Iowa's proposal would expand the concept pioneered by CACs and CPCs to serve adult victims of sexual assault.

Right now, there is no comprehensive multidisciplinary center to support adult sexual-assault survivors anywhere in Iowa. This has resulted in a massive gap in services for victims and survivors of crime and we believe that establishing such a center would not only improve outcomes for patients seen at the center, but also improve resulting prosecutions.

As prosecutors, we know that our cases are better, and we are more likely to keep dangerous sex offenders off the street, when victims and survivors of crime have access to comprehensive medical treatment and the kind of social services contemplated by having the proposed center. The evidence we can present at trial is also better, and more likely to result in conviction, when collected by trained sexual assault nurse examiners (“SANEs”) like those that would be based at the proposed center.

The stakeholders at the SAFE Center have been instrumental in training SANEs across the state over the last five years, but we have encountered cases where emergency-room doctors and nurses (who lack the specialized training possessed by SANEs) have not followed best practices when treating patients, documenting medical statements, and collecting evidence. Additional support and training in this area would greatly benefit prosecutors and establishing a multidisciplinary center will be a crucial step toward establishing uniform best practices across Iowa.

Finally, the state of Iowa has a vested interest in providing all of the resources necessary to support healing for victims and survivors of these crimes. Currently, a victim has to navigate the system almost all on their own, calling different agencies to learn what if any support systems exist and battling reams of red tape. The center proposed by SAFE Center of Iowa would be a centralized location where all of the resources available to victims can be provided and (perhaps most importantly) explained to these citizens, who are often living through some of the worst days and weeks of their lives.

We urge you to support this proposal and we are in absolute support of the creation of this center. If we can provide any additional feedback or support, please do not hesitate to let us know.

Respectfully submitted,¹



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¹ This comment is submitted in the authors' individual capacity, rather than any official capacity. The views expressed in this comment do not necessarily reflect the views of the Attorney General or the Department of Justice.