



April 3, 2023
Governor Kim Reynolds
Iowa Capital
Des Moines Iowa

Dear Governor Reynolds,

We are writing in support of the S.A.F.E Center proposal. UnityPoint Des Moines Emergency Departments currently provide frontline care for sexual assault patients from across the state by way of a medical evaluation, performed by an Emergency Medicine provider, followed by a sexual assault nurse exam (SANE), performed by a specialized sexual assault nurse. Limited sexual assault nurse coverage is currently provided by Polk County. Surrounding counties in the state have more limited or no sexual assault nurse coverage. This, along with the downstream challenges of ED boarding, results in sexual assault patients being forced to wait hours and hours to be seen for care. Because of these unavoidable realities sexual assault patients often leave without being seen before an examination can be done by either a medical provider or a SANE nurse.

A vast majority of sexual assault patients do not require hospital level medical services but only forensic services. As such, it is unnecessary for local Emergency Departments to serve as the gatekeeper for the forensic evaluation. By intertwining these services unnecessary delays and logistical barriers are introduced. It is also worth noting that Emergency Medicine Physicians, Ob/Gyn Physicians, hospital nurses, nor any other medical providers in hospitals are trained to perform these exams and the associated legal chain of custody procedures. These exams require highly specialized and time intensive training for which there is no infrastructure or requirements for hospitals to provide. As such hospitals do not provide this training nor would it be tenable for them to do so. Despite this, the only locations where patients can currently obtain access to these services is through local hospitals and Emergency Departments where long wait times and a chaotic environment await them. There is a better way.

The S.A.F.E center proposal would provide these patients 24/7 access to the services they need in their moment of crisis as well as the associated wrap around services they will need in follow up. This multidisciplinary approach is a significant improvement over the fragmented care being provided in local Emergency Departments.

Emergency Departments will always be available for the small number of sexual assault patients who need emergent medical cares but for the vast majority of sexual assault patients the S.A.F.E Center can provide all the services needed in a timelier and more appropriate environment.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Clint R Hawthorne".

Clint Hawthorne MD
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A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Jill Heilskov".

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