



**Office of
Representative Hannah E. Kane
Commonwealth of Massachusetts**

For Immediate Release

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Rep. Kane co-sponsored legislation to address sexual violence and misconduct on college campuses passes

BOSTON – State Representative Hannah Kane (R-Shrewsbury) recently supported legislation that requires Massachusetts colleges to implement policies to prevent sexual violence and misconduct on campus and provide additional support and resources to students.

Senate Bill 2979, *An Act relative to sexual violence on higher education campuses*, was enacted by the House of Representatives and the Senate on January 5, during the final hours of the 2019-2020 legislative session. The bill, which would apply to both public and private colleges and universities, is now on Governor Charlie Baker’s desk for his review and signature.

A 2019 national survey on sexual assault and misconduct conducted by the Association of American Universities identified a 13% non-consensual sexual conduct rate on campuses nationwide. Although the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN) reports that female college students between the ages of 18 and 24 are three times more likely to experience sexual violence, the U.S. Department of Justice estimates that 80% of sexual violence cases go unreported.

Representative Kane said Senate Bill 2979, of which she was an original co-sponsor back when the bill was filed, requires colleges to conduct regular surveys on campus sexual misconduct and to publicly post their sexual misconduct policies. They must also designate at least one confidential “resource provider,” who will be responsible for informing students of their reporting options, the college’s disciplinary process, and the legal process available through local law enforcement agencies. The resource provider will also share with students details on the medical, health, and counseling services that are available to them, both on campus and through local, community-based rape crisis centers or domestic violence programs, as well as available school-based supportive measures related to academic and residence life.

Under Senate Bill 2979, colleges must enter into memorandums of understanding with a community-based sexual assault crisis service center funded by the Department of Public Health (DPH) if they do not already provide a center of their own, as well as a community-based domestic violence program funded by DPH. This requirement is designed to ensure that students and employees can access free and confidential counseling and advocacy services, either on campus or off campus.

The bill also establishes a task force that will be charged with developing model questions to be used on college sexual misconduct surveys in Massachusetts. The task force will submit its model questions and recommendations to the Commissioner of Higher Education by January 1, 2022.

Representative Kane noted that Senate Bill 2979 also establishes a process for incidents to be reported anonymously, and requires colleges to train students and staff on sexual assault prevention. Colleges will also be required to annually disclose the number of sexual misconduct reports they receive to the Department of Higher Education.

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