



Honorable Members of Congress,

As a sexual assault survivor and the spokesperson of Natasha's Justice Project (NJP), I am writing you to voice my support for H.R. 320, *The Rapid DNA Act of 2015*, and to encourage you to consider supporting it as well. This important legislation will integrate Rapid DNA systems into law enforcement agencies so as to dramatically decrease backlog of rape kits and other DNA samples.

Rapid DNA instruments allow accurate DNA tests to be conducted in under 90 minutes, while current testing techniques take weeks to months to be completed. This contributes greatly to the rape kit backlog, a nationwide problem. Each rape kit represents a person. This could be your sister, niece, daughter or wife, a grandparent, your boyfriend, brother or childhood friend. This could be your story.

My story begins when I was a 20-year-old student, living my dream in Manhattan when my nightmares materialized in the form of a monster who held me at gun point and raped me. I managed to survive the attack, and was taken to the hospital by ambulance and sat in the ER waiting room for what felt like days. My body was the crime scene. As painful as the experience was, I have never regretted going through that process. Not even after I found out that the rape kit containing evidence of the crime committed against me had sat on a shelf collecting dust for nearly a decade.

Rape kits sitting untested for decades, unfortunately, is an all too common occurrence. Too often, the FBI accredited labs that process rape kits and other DNA samples are overworked and under-resourced. Meanwhile, law enforcement agencies are utilizing DNA tests more and more. This inability to meet the growing demand of DNA tests creates an ever growing backlog of rape kits and other DNA samples. Rapid DNA can help reduce this backlog by freeing up valuable resources at these laboratories and allow them to focus on rape kits.

Unfortunately, Rapid DNA technology cannot be fully utilized due to a 1994 law that requires all DNA tests that use the FBI's CODIS database be conducted by accredited laboratories. H.R. 320 would correct this outdated law by allowing local law enforcement agencies around the country to use Rapid DNA systems to compare DNA samples collected at the time of arrest to profiles in CODIS. Not only will this help officers find violent offenders linked to previous crimes, but it will also help to quickly exonerate the innocent.

My hope is that you will support this important legislation that will provide a modicum of comfort victims of crime, help exonerate the innocent, and help law enforcement officers do their jobs swiftly and effectively.

Thank you,

*Natasha A. Alifancho*

Sources:

<http://www.thedailybeast.com/articles/2014/11/24/how-i-stopped-my-rapist.html>

<http://natashasjusticeproject.org/natasha/>