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## **FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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## **Representatives Davis and Fine Applaud Approval of Victims of Sexual Assault Bill**

**TALLAHASSEE, Fla.** – Yesterday, **Governor DeSantis** signed [HB 1189](#) into law, which recognizes the importance of engaged community partners addressing sexual assault and formalizes the need for trauma-informed and victim-centered first responders to sexual violence. **Representatives Tracie Davis (D-Jacksonville)** and **Randy Fine (R-Palm Bay)** sponsored the House version of the legislation that codifies sexual assault response teamwork in statute and requires culturally responsive, trauma-informed sexual violence training for law enforcement officers.

Florida's 31 certified rape crisis centers currently coordinate sexual assault response teams (SARTs) in their service areas. Members are allied professionals who meet regularly to ensure systems like advocacy, law enforcement, and health care in each jurisdiction are collaborating effectively.

The Victims of Sexual Offenses law elevates the importance of these meetings and outlines required community partners like the county health department, state attorney's office, law enforcement officials, and health care professionals. Having a multidisciplinary group of members at the table ensures survivors receive the best possible response. Per the new law, the SARTs must have written protocols to address areas like law enforcement and immediate crisis response, procedures for maintaining victim confidentiality during a forensic exam, and they must promote and support the use of qualified, trained sexual assault nurse examiners.

"Proud to have been part of the team to ensure these commonsense fixes to our law were made this session. This new law generates additional resources for victims of sexual violence, more arrests of sexual predators, increased privacy for the victims, and most importantly, equipping officers with the skills and methods needed to eliminate the re-traumatization to victims," said **State Representative Tracie Davis**.

"My life was forever changed by hearing the story of Daedra Logan and her violent

rape at the hands of Brevard County serial rapist Robert Burns,” said **State Representative Randy Fine**. “The system failed her then, and it continues to fail her today. I promised Daedra during the campaign that I would make it my mission to protect her, and I am honored to partner with Senator Book and Representative Davis to fight for Daedra -- and everyone like her.”

The new law also requires basic skills courses for law enforcement include culturally responsive, trauma-informed training on interviewing victims of sexual violence and investigating sexual assault by July 1, 2022. Trauma-informed training for law enforcement educates officers on the science of how trauma affects the brain and victim behavior. Tools learned in these trainings help establish a more effective relationship between law enforcement and survivors while also increasing the likelihood of offenders being held accountable.

“The knowledge gained by law enforcement in trauma-informed training and the subsequent use in the field help to improve victims' overall experience with the investigation,” said **Jennifer Dritt, Florida Council Against Sexual Violence Executive Director**. “Promoting a multidisciplinary approach to sexual assault response has been a cornerstone of providing victim-centered services for decades in Florida. This law reinforces efforts to provide comprehensive support to survivors.”

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