



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
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SACRAMENTO, CA - After seeing reports that a DNA sample collected from a sexual violence victim during rape kit exam was later used to link them to an unrelated crime, ValorUS (VALOR) strongly believes that using survivors DNA for other purposes will have a chilling effect on survivors seeking help after a sexual assault.

When survivors consent to receiving a sexual assault forensic exam, they do so under the trust and belief that their DNA will be used to seek justice in their case, and other sexual assault crimes. Any other use of evidence collected from a survivor's body, goes against the spirit and intent of the Sexual Assault Victims' DNA Bill of Rights. In fact, the California legislature has recently changed a number of laws to ensure that DNA evidence will be kept for the purposes of more effectively prosecuting sexual assaults, not for use in other unrelated matters.

Further, VALOR is extremely concerned that this development will have a chilling effect on survivors seeking help after they are assaulted. Sexual assault is already an underreported and underprosecuted crime in California, and we should not be creating more reasons why survivors should be afraid to come forward and seek help. Sandra Henriquez, VALOR's CEO, states that "As sexual assault survivors seek healing and justice, they need to know that they can trust our processes, and that coming forward will not result in their agency and power once again being taken from them."

It is critical that we are forthcoming with survivors about how their information will actually be used, we vigorously protect the identifying information of survivors, and that we continue improving our systems for investigating and prosecuting sexual assault overall. VALOR is exploring options to immediately develop a change in the law that will better protect survivors.

VALOR (formerly the California Coalition Against Sexual Assault) is a national and statewide organization committed to advancing equity and ending sexual violence. Since our founding in 1980, we have continued to build dynamic relationships across a diverse range of communities, institutions and systems, and mobilize our network of survivors and advocates to influence change. Through leadership, prevention, and advocacy, we are fearlessly pursuing a world free from violence where the dignity of every person is valued and respected.

To find a California rape crisis center please visit:

https://www.valor.us/get-help/wpbdp_category/california/