

December 10, 2019

The Honorable Nancy Pelosi  
Speaker of the House  
H-232, U.S. Capitol  
Washington, D.C., 20515

Dear Speaker Pelosi,

On behalf of victims of crime across Missouri and the nation, we urge you to include the reauthorization of the Debbie Smith DNA backlog grant program in any end-of-year appropriations bills or continuing resolution. As you know, Debbie Smith programs provide much-needed funding to crime labs to process DNA evidence and strengthen the national DNA database that provides justice to victims. Unfortunately, this critical program expired on September 30, 2019, and has not been reauthorized. Failing to reauthorize this program negatively impacts victims, law enforcement agencies, and state and local governments across the nation.

Since the Debbie Smith program was established in 2005, nearly 200,000 DNA matches have been made in criminal cases, providing justice to victims in cases that may have otherwise gone unsolved. But law enforcement can't keep up without assistance. Untested DNA cases have increased by 85% since 2011 given the adoption of technology and an increase in the DNA samples submitted. Hundreds of thousands of rape and DNA kits in labs and law enforcement stations have not been tested. We need the Debbie Smith program now more than ever.

Under Debbie Smith, Congress provides \$151 million dollars annually to state and local labs for DNA and rape kit testing. It provides \$12.5 million for state and local governments for training programs and \$30 million for state and local governments to create programs to collect and use DNA evidence related to sexual assaults. Missouri law enforcement agencies are currently working to reduce the backlog in rape kit testing, and we know these funds are critical to ensuring that law enforcement agencies everywhere have the resources and tools they need to serve crime victims and prosecute predators.

The Missouri Attorney General's Office recently conducted an inventory of sexual assault examination kits, finding approximately 7,000 untested or partially tested kits. These kits represent real people who have suffered and who have voluntarily and bravely undergone sexual assault examinations. Funds like those available through the Debbie Smith program are essential to ensuring these kits are tested and these survivors of sexual assault receive the closure and justice they deserve.

Survivors, advocates, Attorneys General offices, labs, law enforcement agencies, and Senate and House lawmakers agree that we must immediately reauthorize this program. As you know, the U.S. Senate passed S. 820, the *Debbie Smith Act*, on May 16, 2019, by unanimous consent. Every U.S. Senator supported this legislation and acted in a bipartisan fashion before the authorization lapsed. The House could vote on this stand-alone bill immediately and send it to the President's

desk. Instead, the House passed H.R. 777, the *Debbie Smith Reauthorization Act*, on October 23, 2019. Both bills passed with the support of the Rape, Abuse, and Incest National Network (RAINN). The bills have only minor differences, and we support either the House or Senate reauthorization language. The most important action item is acting together to reauthorize this program as soon as possible, not failing to act over a struggle regarding which chamber will have the pride of authorship.

We urge you to end this standoff and make reauthorization a top priority in the end-of year appropriations bills or continuing resolution. For victims across the country, this program is no less important than the many other programs, including national flood insurance and community health centers, that were reauthorized in the continuing resolutions in September and November 2019.

We thank you for your immediate attention to this issue and your concern for protecting victims across the country. Should you have any questions, please do not hesitate to contact our offices.

Thank you,



Ann Wagner  
Member of Congress, MO-02



Eric Schmitt  
Missouri Attorney General