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For Immediate Release

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# DA Sponsored Bill to Help Victims of Sexual Assault Approved in Senate Public Safety Committee

A bill sponsored by the San Diego County District Attorney's Office establishing an amnesty clause to encourage victims and witnesses of sexual assault to testify in court once again received bipartisan support this morning and passed on consent out of the Senate Public Safety Committee. The bill is authored by Assemblymember Tasha Boerner Horvath.

AB 1927 would provide immunity for victims and witnesses of sexual assault from the consequences of illegal alcohol or drug use occurring at the time of their alleged assault. Higher education institutions nationwide, including the University of California, have already implemented such amnesty clauses on their campuses. Under current law, victims must go through a process that requires them to be compelled to testify in court before it can be granted. This process unnecessarily increases trauma to the victim by requiring them to appear in front of a judge for offenses unrelated to the sexual assault.

"The last thing we want is for the criminal justice system to re-victimize people who bravely come forward to report crimes," said San Diego County District Attorney Summer Stephan, the bill's sponsor. "We can't continue to have a system which treats victims like criminals for using the very same drugs or alcohol which often are fueling their abusers' crimes."

According to the Federal Bureau of Investigation (FBI) 2018 Uniform Crime Reporting, California had more than 15,000 reported forcible rapes – the highest number in the United States. The Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that this problem is particularly prevalent among college-age students - approximately 80 percent of sexual assaults against college students, and 67 percent of non-students, go unreported.

"We all know too well that sexual assault is the most underreported violent crime in America," said Assemblymember Boerner Horvath. "Many victims and survivors do not come forward for fear of retaliation, even fear of being blamed for the assault. This bill will empower them to report the abuse

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without fear of prosecution. Today's vote brings us closer to extending the same amnesty already provided on college campuses to sexual assault victims and witnesses throughout California."

AB 1927 will be heard next on the floor of the Senate.

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About the San Diego County District Attorney's Office

*The San Diego County DA's Office prosecutes all felony crimes in the county and misdemeanor crimes committed outside the City of San Diego. The office files about 40,000 criminal cases a year and balances prosecution with numerous crime prevention programs. District Attorney Summer Stephan leads the office of more than 1,000 dedicated employees who pursue fair and equal justice, and support victims daily across San Diego County.*