



# State of New York

## Executive Chamber

### Proclamation

**Whereas**, New York State shares a deep concern for victims and survivors of sexual assault and recognizes the critical importance of supporting individuals as they seek justice and healing; and

**Whereas**, New York State is committed to ending the cycle of violence through strong policies, legislation, education, and advocacy, and by funding programs and services across the state that support victims, survivors, and their families; and

**Whereas**, the New York State Office of Victim Services (OVS) advises individuals who have been sexually assaulted to seek medical treatment as soon as possible to ensure their health, well-being, and safety; individuals can also find a sense of reassurance in knowing that they would be relieved of any financial costs associated with forensic testing in the aftermath of an assault, through reimbursement by OVS; and

**Whereas**, OVS currently funds 239 victim assistance programs that provide essential services to victims of crime and their families; information about those programs is available through [ovs.ny.concerncenter.com](https://ovs.ny.concerncenter.com); and New York State's Domestic and Sexual Violence Hotline is available for confidential support and advocacy 24/7: 800-942-6906 (voice), 844-997-2121 (text) and [opdv.ny.gov](https://opdv.ny.gov) (chat); and

**Whereas**, OVS is responsible for storing sexual offense evidence collection kits that have not been released to law enforcement for 20 years, which gives victims and survivors additional time to decide whether to report the crime and if they do, OVS will release their kit to law enforcement for testing and further investigation; and

**Whereas**, individuals are far more likely to disclose their sexual assault to a friend, loved one, or family member, instead of law enforcement; however, if a loved one responds with disbelief, doubt, or shame, the individual who shared details of the assault is less likely to report the incident to police or seek help for physical or emotional trauma, and may experience further harm to their physical and psychological well-being; and

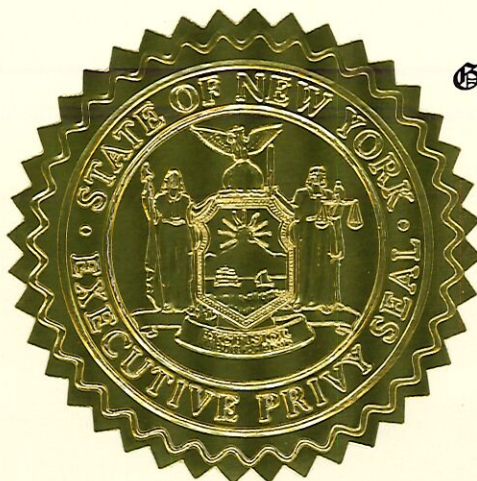
**Whereas**, Start by Believing, a program of End Violence Against Women International, seeks to raise awareness about these negative effects; educate friends, family members, criminal justice and other professionals about how they can improve their response; offer support and respect an individual's decisions about how they wish to proceed, access resources, or engage with the criminal justice system; and

**Whereas**, New York State joins in efforts to improve how society and individuals respond to those who have been victims of sexual violence, and supports the important goals of the Start by Believing initiative;

**Now, Therefore**, I, Kathy Hochul, Governor of the State of New York, do hereby proclaim April 5, 2023 as

## START BY BELIEVING DAY

in the Empire State.



**Given** under my hand and the Privy Seal of the State  
at the Capitol in the City of Albany this fifth day  
of April in the year two thousand twenty-three.

*Kathy Hochul*  
Governor

*[Signature]*  
Secretary to the Governor  
Karen Persichilli Keogh