

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:**

September 13, 2019

Contact: Matt Baca (505) 270-7148

## **AG Balderas, NM Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs Warn About ‘At-Home Rape Kit’ Companies, Issues Risk Advisory**

*Albuquerque, NM*—Today, Attorney General Hector Balderas and the New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs issued the following statements and risk advisory to all New Mexicans in response to increased reporting about the rise of so called “DIY rape kits,” which are set to be sold commercially by MeToo Kits Company, based in New York City, and the New Jersey-based The Preserve Group. Attorney General Balderas issued the advisory because of the extremely dangerous suggestion by any commercial entity that survivors of sexual assault should personally administer evidence-collection kits as a substitute for a professional forensic exam.

“Understanding that survivors of sexual assault experience tremendous amounts of trauma after their assault, a self-administered sexual assault kit is absolutely the wrong approach to investigating and prosecuting a terrible act of violence,” said Attorney General Balderas. “I stand with survivors and my Attorney General colleagues across the country in calling for these companies to immediately cease the marketing of this terrible idea. Survivors should know that law enforcement officials will stand with them, and that professional forensic examinations are the safest and most necessary means of holding their abusers accountable.”

Kim Alaburda, the Executive Director of the Coalition expressed dismay about the product as well: “In addition to the myriad legal issues with these products, a do-it-yourself evidence kit bypasses an entire repose system geared to provide healing resources, such as advocates to provide information and support, no-cost counseling services, and victim compensation resources to defray costs of crime victimization.”

In response to the rise of these products, Attorney General Balderas warns New Mexicans of their danger and recommends the following:

- First and foremost, survivors should know that members of the law enforcement, medical, and service provider communities are on hand 24/7 to ensure their safety in the event of sexual trauma;
- These kits are no substitute for the medical care or services that may be necessary following an incident of sexual violence, in addition to a SANE exam;
- It is extremely unlikely that a self-administered sexual assault kit will be admissible as evidence in a criminal prosecution of a sexual abuser.

The Attorney General encourages survivors of sexual violence to immediately seek help. Law enforcement agencies stand ready to assist, and there are numerous resources that can be located in every corner of the State through the New Mexico Coalition of Sexual Assault Programs here: <http://nmcsap.org/find-help/sexual-assault-service-providers-sasp2/>

###