

March 18, 2022

Delegate Luke Clippinger
House of Representatives Judiciary Committee
Room 101
House Office Building
Annapolis, MD 21401

RE: SB68 – Sexual Offenses – Crime of Violence and Lifetime Supervision

Chairman Clippinger,

My name is Annie Kenny, and I am a single mother to three daughters from St. Mary's County. Several years ago, I discovered that my now ex-husband was abusing our oldest daughter. He was indicted on felony child sex abuse charges and is now a Tier III Registered Sex Offender for life. At the time of his arrest, my daughters were 15, 8, and 2. It was my 15 year old who was strong and brave enough to go through the difficult process of reporting, withstanding countless interviews, trial preparation, etc in order to get her father convicted. But it is the daughter who was 8 at the time who is suffering the most to this day.

I've told you how at 10, she was cutting herself and running away. And how at 11 she was admitted to Children's Hospital's psychiatric department for a week and put on antipsychotic medication. Well at 12, instead of spending her summer vacation with her friends or in summer camps, she spent THREE WEEKS in a psychiatric hospital. She is filled with rage and pain and confusion. She has panic attacks and throws up at school. She lays on the floor at night crying that her body doesn't feel right. Her name is Nora. And she is dying a painful, slow death. My entire life revolves around trying to save her. And most days, I don't think I'm going to be able to.

There is no way that Nora at 8 could have gone through the same process her big sister did. There's no way she could go through it now. But if my ex-husband's conviction had been for abusing her, instead of our oldest daughter, he would have been subject to Lifetime Supervision. Instead, he received a mostly suspended 10 year sentence (so we could avoid an actual trial), and only FIVE years of probation. His five year probation term is actually set to expire later this year. But I promise you, he is not safe. And his victims are not recovered.

This bill isn't about punishment, although the opposition tends to view it that way. It is about protection. That's it. There is no punishment appropriate for what sexual abuse does to a child. There's nothing that rights this wrong, that puts a little girl or boy back together and back on the life path that was intended for them. But as a society, we are failing as a whole if we aren't leaving the door open for potential interventions for these offenders that we clearly don't understand, nor can we predict their future behavior. Do you understand what drives a trusted adult to molest a child in their care? Or to rape them? Then how can you be comfortable with the arbitrary five year mark of removing their supervision team? How can you possibly be ok with the understanding that after five years, you cannot require drug testing. Or therapy. Or sex offender treatment. Or restrictions from children.

I don't want to be here anymore. I don't want to be doing this. Fighting for the obvious. I am so angry that four years later, I am STILL trying to understand what could possibly matter more than saving children from this type of horrific, life-long trauma. I don't even know if I'll be able to speak at this

hearing, because when it is happening, I'll be heading to court to watch my ex-husband be sentenced in his NEW case. That's right, last year, he was charged with molesting two more children, and he has plead guilty to some of the charges. And I am so relieved that he will NOT be getting off probation later this year as scheduled, because he will instead be incarcerated for many, many years. But I'm devastated that it took more innocent children to get him there. Delegate McComas said it best last year. This type of abuse destroys the very soul of a child. Nora will never be the same. I don't even know if Nora will ever be ok. We should stop at nothing to protect children from offenders that are ALREADY convicted of this type of horrific abuse. Every year that this doesn't pass leaves more Maryland children at risk. DO SOMETHING. NOW.

As always, I do appreciate your time. I am sure you are tired of hearing from me, but the only way to get rid of me is to pass the bills that will better protect children going forward.

Annie Kenny

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