

HB465

FAV

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Dear Judiciary Committee:

When I told on my upper elementary teacher, the police told me, "A woman wouldn't molest a girl." They did not follow proper protocol for interviewing children who are sexual abuse survivors, though I didn't learn that until after the interview. They did not interview my classmates, to my knowledge, who called me our teacher's girlfriend the previous year, nor did they interview former teachers who told me they believed me.

Even before the notice came that she wasn't being charged, my abuser rallied her enablers and started what I called her vengeance campaign. I was a child, so she couldn't sue me personally. But she sued my parents as part of her retribution. She had warned me that she would destroy my life if I told on her.

The lawsuit was costly, stressful, and put pressure on my parents and on me. It was thrown out a few times by different judges, and she kept amending it, refiling, and having us served.

As a child, it felt like the justice system sided with the child molester, rather than the victim. There was nothing I could do to stop the stalking, harassment, or more, and the weaponization of a lawsuit to punish me and my family was almost more than I could bear.

I didn't see the point in living anymore. The lawsuit on top of the trauma from abuse, the failure by the police, the other relationship, and more was just too much for me. I had PTSD from the abuse and the events that followed, and it was a struggle to survive at times.

But I also had a stubbornness that made me want to continue on, despite what was happening. I wanted to dedicate my life to protecting children. I didn't want anyone else to experience what I had.

That is why I'm submitting this testimony today. I don't want anyone else to experience the trauma of being sued after reporting abuse in good faith.

Please support HB 465. It can change lives, and perhaps even save one. I would have less extensive trauma if my abuser hadn't been able to weaponize the justice system to retaliate against me.

I am happy to share more about my story anytime, answer questions, etc.

Thank you for listening to me and considering this request.

Sincerely,

Donna Bulatowicz, Ph.D.