



# Exchangite

Exchange Club of Dayton, OH



*Preventing Child Abuse . . . Serving America*

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Good Morning, my name is Khadijah Ali. I am president of the Exchange Club of Dayton, OH. I want to thank Chairman Brenner, and his fellow members of the House Education and Career Readiness Committee for the opportunity to speak to you today about House Bill 377. I would also like to thank Representative Hagan's office for alerting us. As you know, House Bill 377 is similar to what is termed "Erin's Law" in many states. It would prescribe that a curriculum be set forth in grades kindergarten through six, annual age appropriate instruction in child sexual abuse prevention, including information on available counseling and resources for children who are sexually abused; along with other health related curricula.

- 1) The largest program for our National Exchange Club is prevention of child abuse. In that arena, we have promoted Child Abuse Prevention (CAP) Centers, Stewards for Children training, training for officers on predatory use of social media, and support of local agencies - such as the highly recognized Care House, and raising general awareness.
- 2) Consequences of child abuse include physical trauma, huge financial burdens, continuing cycles of abuse, difficulty in maintaining adult relationships, and future depression that frequently leads to addiction.
- 3) Unfortunately, there are few avenues to communicate the perils that will reach the young children who we want to protect.
- 4) It is critical that children understand that they have resources and people they can trust with whom they can share information before adolescence (grades kindergarten through 6), as we know that adolescents are unlikely to share information of this nature.
- 5) Schools may be the only venue to reach the majority of the most vulnerable children. That is why it is essential that schools can be pro-active with this legislation. The state already recognizes their obligation to help children understand the other aspects of health, and this may be the most critical of these issues if not addressed.

## Proposed HB377

- 1) We recognize that our specific item concern is an amendment to a much broader bill that covers the responsibilities of each district to determine a curriculum for all schools under its control including certain subjects- One of those subjects is health.
- 2) To review, the bill addresses (d) In grades kindergarten through six, annual age appropriate instruction in child sexual abuse prevention, including information on available counseling and resources for children who are sexually abused; As Introduced (e) In grades kindergarten through six, instruction in personal safety and assault prevention, except that upon written request of the student's parent or guardian, a student shall be excused from taking instruction in personal safety and assault.

Referring to Sec. 3314.0310. (A) If a community school serves students in any of grades kindergarten through six, the school's curriculum for those grades shall include annual age-appropriate instruction in child sexual abuse prevention, including information on available counseling and resources for children

who are sexually abused.

Sec. 3319.073. (states) (A) The board of education of each city and exempted village school district and the governing board of each educational service center shall adopt or adapt the curriculum developed by the department of education for, or shall develop in consultation with public or private agencies or persons involved in child abuse prevention or intervention programs, a program of in-service training in the prevention of child abuse, violence, and substance abuse and the promotion of positive youth development.

3) (B) (states) Each board shall incorporate training in school safety and violence prevention, including human trafficking content, into the in-service training required by division (A) of this section.

We realize that teachers are being required to do many tasks so we appreciate that the training completed under this division would count toward the satisfaction of requirements for professional development required by the school district or service center board.

Currently school staff are required by law to notify authorities if they suspect abuse. However, there needs to be more robust training and according to <http://www.erinslaw.org/>, this should include....

\* knowledge that 1 in 4 girls and 1 in 6 boys are sexually abused by the age of 18. If the teacher doesn't think he/she knows a student that this has happened to think again. These children are sitting in our classrooms.

\* guidance on how to talk to students about safe and unsafe touches, safe and unsafe secrets, giving them examples, make students aware of safe adults they can go to if they are being abused. (examples: teacher, principal, school counselor, parent, or other non-offending relative)

\* knowledge regarding warning signs for physical abuse: bruises, change in appetite, inappropriate clothing, aggression towards others, defiance, disruptive behavior, coming to school too early or late, changes in grades, cheating or lying.

Recognizing that these may reflect other negative situations, it is imperative to document and coordinate information with other staff. Teachers need guidelines for responding to student disclosure:

- Do not act shocked
- Praise the child by telling them they did the right thing by telling
- Do not pressure the child for information. Do not ask leading questions.
- Let child know they are safe now
- Make the child as comfortable as possible
- Reassure child this is not their fault
- Explain that the school has to notify the police

In addition teachers need to be aware that they should not contact parents as parents may try to have their child recant, may remove the child, may confront the abuser before police are engaged.

We appreciate that the state would not be mandating how this is presented and is leaving room for parent engagement (tricky issue) because each district may find a more relevant way to transmit the knowledge. It could be that, although one child is not permitted to receive instruction, a peer may share or be aware and help a friend. As this will be directed to a younger population, different mediums might be used such as puppet theater (eg. Simon Says Just Tell), videos, learning packets. There are many resources and the bill also acknowledges that the state will provide resources for districts to empower them to provide current, relevant, essential knowledge.

From personal experience -

I am the oldest of 7 siblings. At an early age I assumed the role of protector because of the many abuses we were exposed to. I learned to help my brothers and sisters yet was not able to help myself. My abusers instilled many fears in me not to tell on them, with threats to family and , and they threatened that they would tarnish my reputation with lies. I was afraid of telling my parents and when things happened in school I was not supported. I was always told it was my fault.

As a member of the Exchange Club of Dayton and for many personal reasons I support Erin's law because many remain victims as a result of this abuse. Victims have both traumatizing and devastating physical, emotional, psychological and behavioral consequences, that continue into our adult lives. Some of these result in premature death.

It is a "hidden hurt." We learn to masquerade the hurt of the violations. We feel no one cares who we are and how we are feeling. We have low self-esteem; we lack value and worth; and we develop over time a poor self-image. We are also made to feel that we are at fault which encourages making unhealthy decisions.

In reflection of everything I have overcome, I am proud and grateful to be a voice for the voiceless. Unfortunately, it was not until I was an adult that I became aware of the supports in the community and could benefit from that help. I was blessed to have mentors and I now am able to offer that to others. I presently coordinate and provide services for 2 women's sober homes as a Licensed Addiction Counselor and Licensed Peer Supporter and I am a mentor for the U S Federal Court under the supervision of the honorable Judge Walter H. Rice. I am on the Board of Directors for (ABLE) Advocated for Basic Legal Equality. Again, I am the President of the Exchange Club of Dayton, and I am President- Elect for the Presidents Club of Dayton. To give back, I am very involved in my community to fight against all types of Injustices.

I only mention my many involvements to let you know that support systems are important. Everything I do today is a reflection of who I am as a African American Woman, a Muslim. My spiritual path is Ahmadiya Movement in Islam (love for all; Hatred for None). We need social justice advocates, fighting against injustices and for purposeful survivor-ship with dignity, for all those who have been victimized. We do recover, and we do have a meaning and a God-Given purpose to serve. In support of Erin's Law, parents, teachers, schools and our communities can provide education that will encourage and "Give Voice" for victims to become survivors who then can live healthy lives and give back to ourselves, our families and our communities.

Exchange Club of Dayton and I urge you to report out the bill for consideration by the Senate. Thank you. you. you for your time and understanding.