

62nd House District

Warren County

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Scott Lipps
State Representative
Sponsor Testimony HB 321

Chairman Merrin, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Boyd, and the members of the House Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on HB 321. Erin's Law will mandate child sexual abuse and sexual violence prevention education in schools.

According to the National Center for Victims of Crime, 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 20 boys are victims of child sexual abuse. Every 9 minutes, child sexual abuse claims are substantiated. Children are often taught to be on the lookout for 'Stranger Danger', however, 95% of child sexual abuse is by someone the child knows and trusts. This fact alone makes the passage of Erin's law so crucial.

Unfortunately, this issue hits close to home for the people of my district. Recently, a teacher in Springboro was charged with 36 counts of gross sexual imposition involving 28 students all under the age of 13. Although only charged for 28 students, law enforcement believes that 88 students have been affected, and possibly abusing many more. These students were assaulted by someone they believed was trustworthy and there are now 88 young lives that will be forever changed as a result.

Recently, our office received a heart-wrenching email from a parent of one of the students in Springboro and I'd like to share an excerpt of it on their behalf:

"I knew to talk to my little girl about it very early on. I truly felt she understood. I've recently been reading about Erin's law. Someone can come in and teach children this early on, a professional, someone trained to know what and how manipulative child molesters are. Someone to teach them the things parents didn't think of, and then maybe there wouldn't have been 88 of them, maybe there

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would've been one or two before someone stood up and recognized that it was wrong. I need your help to get that to Ohio and into our school systems. Please consider adding this to your list of things to do. Our children need this, and as a parent, I am begging you."

Survivors of child sexual abuse are more likely to experience later sexual abuse and have an increased chance of suicide. This vicious cycle can only end if we are able to find new ways of preventing it before it starts. As of July of this year, there are 37 states that have adopted Erin's Law. Joining them is an essential step in the right direction.

I will now hand it over to my joint sponsor Representative Kelly to testify further on the importance of this legislation.