

Dear Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Manchester, Ranking Member Robinson Jr., and Members of the Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thanks for the opportunity to provide written testimony in support of HB 321.

Our daughter attended Clearcreek Elementary in Springboro Ohio for the 2018/2019 school year as a first grade student.

During what we believe the entirety of that year, she along with over 88 other first grade girls in the building we're inappropriately touched by their gym teacher Austin Hopkins.

As of this March, he was tried and found guilty of 34 out of 36 counts of gross sexual imposition, and is now serving time in jail.

His sentencing is scheduled for [June 3rd](#).

He completely uprooted an entire community with these evil acts that for months went unnoticed IN a school building.

Not one of the young girls who were merely 6/7 years of age ever said one word about the horrific criminal acts that us as parents, the police, attorneys, a judge, and an entire courtroom had to watch on surveillance video to any of their teachers, parents or trusted individuals in their lives.

For months and months these girls suffered in silence not even knowing what crimes were taking place day after day.

Imagine if you will being called by the police, being told your daughter has been seen on video being violated in school non the less then having to go into a room, witness it firsthand right in front of your eyes, and feel completely helpless.

Our family has been torn apart by this, we even made the choice to leave Springboro and move out of state, and we are not the only family that choose to do so.

A large part of this decision was the lack of support, and education we and the entire district were not receiving.

I and my husband first learned of Erin's Law when we were interviewed by a local News station about what had occurred to our daughter behind the gym walls at Clearcreek elementary.

In our interview we both clearly agreed had Erin's Law been mandated in Ohio, and sexual abuse education been a requirement in our children's schools, we believe our daughter, and others would have known to come forward to a teacher or parent, and relay that something was very wrong in gym class.

Had they had the knowledge and tools they needed we may not have had the extreme number of victims, and the abuse may not have gone on for so many months. Also I felt his unbelievable level of manipulation and calculation would not have occurred because these little girls, and the teachers would have known the red flags to be aware of at a higher level. Many could have been spared.

This type of education especially after what occurred in Springboro HAS to be implemented immediately, there is no question about it, as someone who has been personally affected by this at such a deep level, and it angers me to think that this would even be a debate of being the right course of action to take.

It is a nightmare that I know our daughter, my husband, myself, over 88 other girls, teachers, and hundreds of parents continue to navigate even today with him behind bars.

The mental repercussions of this evil and horrific event will stay with these girls and families, and really the entire community for years and years to come.

It seems pretty cut and dry, if you teach my child to literally defend their life against a weapon, a fire, or extreme weather event, they should learn how to defend their life against a predator, even when it's their OWN teacher, in THEIR school building, a place where they should feel safe and protected against the evil of this world.

Give our kids a voice, help save others, and please get this law PASSED.

Dear Chairman Jones, Vice Chair Manchester, Ranking Member Robinson Jr., and Members of the Ohio House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for your time and the opportunity to submit testimony in support of HB321. Please pass this important legislation.