

My name is Ashley Smith and my daughter attended Clearcreek Elementary in Springboro Ohio for the 2019/2020 school year as a first-grade student where she was in my mind safe. However, she was not safe when she attended her weekly gym class. My daughter along with 88 other first grade students were subjected to inappropriate and sexual contact with their then gym teacher John Austin Hopkins. He was later tried and found guilty of 34 of 36 counts of gross sexual imposition and is awaiting sentencing.

Mr. Hopkins, as so many of our children in the Springboro community called him, sought out and prayed on innocent young little girls. I know this to be true for the simple fact that he was also a 6<sup>th</sup> grade gym and PE teacher and swim coach for the YMCA. Where to the public's knowledge has never inappropriately acted or touched an older girl. He went after our young girls because they to him did not know better and where not educated on what he was doing to them to be criminal and sexual.

When we and our kids' pediatricians teach good touch bad touch it is in our eyes a way that our kids will understand and will be effective enough to protect them. However, in the world we live in today it just isn't enough. My daughter was always told by her pediatrician no one touches your private parts unless your mother or father are present and it is done in a clinical setting for exam purposes approved by your parents. This is where Erin's law comes into play and is so critical for the safety of our children's futures. When Mr. Hopkins day after day touched, fondled, kissed and held all 88 of our innocent little girls, they saw him as a protector and caregiver. They liked him, he was friendly and as we tell our kids in a role that is to be respected. He took advantage of their young minds, knowing they did not see what he was doing as criminal but as in my daughters' words "weird and just not sure why.

My then 6 now 8-year-old is no longer my excited and silly little girl. She is now my confused, emotional, grown beyond her year's child. She never knew why her abuser did what he did to her and at the time she didn't even understand what he was doing to her was something of sexual gratification. She was taught nothing other than good touch bad touch. As we all see now just is not enough. Age appropriate sexual education, that Erin's Law will implement is needed and should be demanded. It will not only protect all of our children in the future, but it will educate parents, care givers and teachers. We will all collectively be educated on signs and behavioral traits children being abused may show. Education in any situation is the powerhouse of our world. We all need to come together for these children and protect them from the unthinkable. We can do that with Erin's law.

It is unfortunate for our children that the world we live in now requires us to teach them about sexual abuse, in a school setting, where we as parents feel they should be safe. Alongside, fire, tornado and active shooter drills, Erin's law can teach our children about sexual abuse that is present in all of our schools. All of these drills are scary for our children at the time they take place. However, they protect them and allow them to feel safe and secure when something bad happens and they know what to do.

An uneducated society is a fear of many. When we educate our children, we secure our future and theirs. Knowledge secures society and that is just what Erin's law will do. It will educate our youth and those who raise them.