My name is Erin Merryn. I am a mother to three small girls and a live long resident of Chicago. My husband was born and raised in Ohio and is a Ohio State Alumni.

I am the founder of Erin’s Law. A law that requires personal body safety to be taught in public schools to children once a year. Erin’s Law is currently passed in 37 states. I testified in 2015 on Erin’s Law in Ohio and sadly almost 5 years later it is still not passed.

As a child I was taught yearly in school tornado drills, bus drills, fire drills, stranger danger, DARE, Bully intervention, internet safety, look both ways when you cross the street. I knew not to go look for the lost puppy, I knew how to run out of the burning building, and I graduated from DARE knowing the 8 ways of how to say NO to drugs. But where were the 8 ways on how to get away and tell today? They never came in my childhood. At my very first overnight at my best friend’s house her uncle sexually abused me. When he continued to molest me and eventually raped me at 7 years old as I kept it a secret. This man threatened me that he would come get me if I told anyone. From ages 6 to 8 I continued to be molested and raped by him.

My saving grace came at 8 ½ when I learned we were moving only to find out I was getting that much closer to my next perpetrator this time a family member. From 11-13 years old my older teenaged cousin molested me. He threatened me every time that this was our secret, no one would believe me, and I would destroy our family if I told. The only message I was getting as a child was from the men hurting me and that was to stay silent. Had I been taught to speak up and not keep this a secret, or what a safe touch and unsafe touch is, a safe secret and an unsafe secret, I feel I would have spoken up from the start instead of being abused for years as a child. It is the lesson we fail to teach our children across this world and I have made it my mission for every child to be empowered with the voice I never had as a kid. I broke my silence after my sister came to me and told me our cousin was sexually abusing her too. Had someone come in and taught us in school not to keep this a secret it could have saved us years of abuse.

Often children are abused for years and don’t come forward until they are adults because they were educated only to stay silent and afraid it was their fault. There are currently 753,000 registered sex offenders in America.

In December 2015 President Obama signed the Every Student Succeeds Act and in that bill there is federal funding provided for every state to be used for Erin’s Law. So it is no longer an unfunded mandated.

We put so much emphasis on stranger danger with kids when 93% of the time children are abused by someone they know and trust. Only 7% of the time it is that stranger we worry so much about. There are 42 million survivors of sexual abuse living in America right now. 3 million of those are children. That could fill 46 national football stadiums. Get that image in your head for a moment. These children are sitting in our classrooms everyday living in silence as their innocence is being killed and the psychological impact this is having on them as they live in this horror.

This law is common sense. I’m asking for an hour out of the school year to give children the voice I never had. Without that voice we are allowing the Jerry Sandusky’s of our world to silence our children and kill their innocence. It is time we start fighting the war going on in our own backyards by empowering children with their voice and putting sex offenders out of business. I am on a mission to get this passed in all 50 states and will not stop until I do.

A perfect example in Ohio where Erin’s Law could have prevented children from being abused is the teacher who is charged with molesting at least 28 students. Imagine if these children had been taught Erin’s Law. I can guarantee you we would not be talking about 28 students being abused.

Erin’s Law is credited for putting an Illinois man behind bars for 40 years after a 9 year old disclosed her abuse while being taught Erin’s Law. A Maryland teacher is spending the next 48 years behind bars as a result of a student coming forward with her abuse and several more after Erin’s Law was taught. I have dozens of more news articles of Erin’s Law bringing arrests and convictions.

Do the right thing for the children of Ohio. Give that 7 year old child that is being sexually abused tonight the voice to tell someone tomorrow instead of being silenced into adulthood.

Thank You,

Erin Merryn