

Thank you esteemed members of the Ohio State Senate Judiciary Committee for providing this opportunity to speak my truth in support of HB 322. I have waited my whole life for this moment.

I am Laura Gray, a 58-year-old woman from Mentor OH with three adult sons.

My parents are devout Roman Catholics.

They met in the eighth grade and married young. When I was born, my mother already had seven children under the age of 11.

In the 1960s and 1970s, it was considered an honor to host the parish priest in your home.

I called ours The Monster.

When The Monster arrived, a snack tray with potato chips and pop was placed in front of him as he settled into his favorite vinyl chair and beckoned me to come sit on his lap. The grooming commenced in my own home.

Each time my mom entered the room, my eyes frantically sought to connect with hers with the hope that she would tell him to stop. While I bounced on those thick dinosaur legs—his big hands hurting me under my dress, my parents would ask if he needed anything. I assumed they must not have known what he was doing to me. After all, he stayed for dinner.

My father worked two jobs, and my mother had MS. The monster groomed not only me but our entire family which allowed the assault to occur for years without suspicion. Sometimes, the Monster would stop by and take me for a ride to pick up much needed and appreciated milk or bread for our family. I took my beloved Raggedy Ann doll with me as I was so afraid to go alone with him. His car had one long front seat. Lying still, I rolled my eyes back towards the window to watch the tall treetops sway.

In my mind I said, “Hello Mr. Tree. How are you today? Please tell Miss Cloud where I am so she can pick me up.”

With that simple fantasy, my mind escaped while my body endured his painful pounding. “Raggy” stayed close, and my tears soaked her matted red hair.

The Monster repeatedly warned me not to tell anyone or he would kill me and my mother.

I was three, four, five, and then six years old. I believed him. Every time.

After bouts of belly pain and numerous UTIs, our family doctor admitted me to the hospital in the spring of 1972. I remember lying in the bed, cold dark hallways outside, waiting for the priest to come take me from there too. From the age of 3 on, I never played again and never felt safe anywhere.

After many tests, doctors determined that my chronic UTIs were the result of a “bubble bath allergy” and upon discharge from the hospital, the abuse coincidentally ceased. I did not tell anyone the truth, as The Monster had convinced me that no one would ever believe me.

I had no childhood; something you can never get back. I bravely started telling people what happened to me shortly after the birth of my first son in the fall of 1998. I was 32 years old and tired of running, and keeping this dark, evil secret. Soon afterwards, I discovered that the Cleveland Diocese was aware of his predatory and pedophile behavior prior to abusing me. The Lake County prosecutor, who eventually dropped the case just days before the Grand Jury in October 2003, even called him a serial rapist. And yet, no justice was ever served.

Ladies and gentlemen, I have spent my entire life learning how to heal, cope and live after being repeatedly raped for years by this master groomer.



Grooming is the gateway to sexual abuse. I ask that you vote yes to protect our vulnerable children. House Bill 322 recognizes grooming for what it is, a crime. The passage of HB 322 is a step in the right direction to deter predatory behavior and help our society recognize and put a stop to these dangerous patterns of conduct. Thank you for your time and attention.