

Hello everyone, my name is Hannah. I am here to share my story and will explain why this bill means so much to me.

When I was 19, about 2.5 years ago, I was shopping at target. I was getting ready to study abroad in Costa Rica and needed to find some summer clothes for the trip. It was New Year's Day, I was wearing sweatpants, slippers, and a long winter north face coat. I went to a target that I would often shop at, close to my parents' house in a nice area. I shopped around for a while--I was in my own little world, enjoying this time and letting myself get excited for my upcoming trip.

During my second trip to the dressing room, after trying on a shirt, I stepped back to look at myself in the mirror. Right when I stepped back, I caught a glimpse of something in the mirror. In an instant, I realized it was a hand holding an iPhone above the door and it was pointed down at me. It was wobbling a bit—as if it was trying to get the perfect angle of me. The sight of the hand holding the camera, pointed at me, is one that I will never forget. I have flashbacks of this image at random times, and it still haunts me.

As I realized what was happening, I changed as frantically as I could into my regular clothes, and questions flooded my mind. Am I alone in a dressing room with this dangerous person? What else are they capable of doing? Should I scream? Should I hide? How long has this person been following me? How could I not have noticed someone acting strange around me while shopping? How long have they been here? I decided to exit the dressing room area and go from there. Upon exiting, I looked around and when I couldn't find a Target employee, I called my mom. I managed to explain the situation through my tears. Immediately, she told me to stay away from the dressing room and she called 911. The police and my parents arrived, and they started the process of finding who did it and charging them for their crime.

Throughout the next year and a half, as I learned more and more about this man and the incident itself, it became clear to me that justice needed to be served—I did not want anyone to go through what I went through. This man has a wife, a young child, and a baby on the way. Who else has he videotaped against their will and knowledge? The babysitter? The neighbor?

As someone who recently graduated with a degree in Early Childhood Education, I have been around so many children and their parents. I felt that it was absolutely necessary for the people surrounding this man to know the danger he possesses. Of course, for my own anger, I wanted this man to face his rightful punishment. But above all, I just wanted to prevent this from happening to anyone else.

Now that you know all of this, you can imagine my disappointment, anger, and confusion when I found out that a technicality of the current law allowed this predator to take a plea deal. Because of a technicality with the law, he was charged with public indecency and faced probation and sex offender counseling. But without being registered as a sex offender, this punishment meant that this man could keep the incident a secret. No one around him had to know. He can keep living his life, without anyone knowing what is really capable of. I worry that this man will continue to commit this crime to other women, due to the small extent of punishment he ended up receiving.

Because of this whole experience, I now live my life differently. No matter how much healing I go through, I now feel the need to take certain precautions to keep myself safe. I now feel the need to be constantly aware of my surroundings. I now know that I can never truly assume that an area is private, even with walls and doors to clearly signal privacy. I now look around for cameras when using areas like dressing rooms or public bathrooms. I now lack trust when working with the parents of students in my class. And when I take all these precautions, I still cannot believe that even if, say, I saw a camera again while using a dressing room—would the person get out of it? Would the law protect me in that situation? So how helpful are these precautions if I am not sure that the law would punish the person if they were caught anyways?

This situation has caused me more hurt than anything else in my life. I will never be exactly the same. Not being in control of your own body is something I never thought I would face, but now I have. And disturbingly, many other women have felt this.

Sometimes I wonder if it would have been best for me to not have seen the camera. For this to have happened without my knowledge. Then I wouldn't have had to face the pain that came after it. But as a believer in Jesus Christ, I know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. I believe that God will bring good out of this horrible situation, and perhaps changing the law so that people are better protected from the position I was in could be one of those ways.

Each time I tell my story, a part of me feels that I am reliving it all over again. But I care so much about this matter that I will tell my story as many times as necessary if it can stop even one person from facing this same situation.

I encourage everyone to think about yourself, your child, your wife, your sister—do you want them to feel safe when they go about their daily lives, using public areas like dressing rooms or bathrooms? This bill is a huge step and could make a large impact on creating a world where women can do everyday activities, without fearing that their body is being used in a way they do not permit.