

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Bird, Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the House Primary and Secondary Education Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on House Bill 105 also known as Erin's Law.

My name is Siara Akers, I'm here as a proponent for Erin's law. I am so thankful to be here and very thankful for you having the second hearing for this very necessary bill.

During the first hearing, I heard a representative ask about parents signing off on if their child should be allowed to hear this lesson on body safety and I wanted to tell you a personal story of mine. In junior high, my best friend's dad made me feel very uncomfortable with things he'd say that were provocative to say to a 13 year old. He then began touching my legs and always finding a way to be near me, just really weird. I honestly felt weird but thought I was over reacting because I watched him to do it to his daughter as well and she acted as if it was normal. By high school though he assaulted me. I woke up in the middle of it happening and literally went paralyzed, not knowing what to do. He groomed me for years just like he did his daughter and I didn't know better. I knew I wasn't allowed to be touched on my private parts but that was it. I highly doubt if my friend came home with a permission slip of the school teaching body safety, how to tell if you feel uncomfortable, her dad would not have signed off on it. It would've killed all the hard work he had put in grooming us. That was 15 years ago. Two weeks after her 30th birthday she committed suicide and left a paper trail saying how she couldn't get over what her dad had done to her and I. Imagine if we would've been taught body safety early on. That would've been stopped before it started. I'm just one story in a million about a friends dad, uncle, cousin. Families keeping it their "family secret." It is not protecting the children being abused by allowing parents to remove them from learning about their own body's safety.

Two months after my friend committed suicide it came to light that my daughter's gym teacher had been touching students. One by one parents were called in the police station to review video footage of the gym teacher groping their little girls. 88 little girls were watched on video in the 90 day period they had video footage of. Numerous little girls a day. The grand jury ultimately felt like 36 of those videos were felony charges although all 88+ ARE victims of being groomed, manipulated and touched. When asking some of those little girls about it they said they felt "weird" they didn't know what to do. This teacher had made it a "reward" to be on his lap and groped. Every single child in the first grade class in the 2018-2019 was manipulated and groomed to think what he was doing was fine, the boys run around and play while the girls take turns on his lap. They all knew what to do when walking into that class period and the videos make that obvious. Had they had one lesson on body safety that year, any girl could've stood up to say "wait a second? This is happening and it's not right" a little boy could've even said something from what they have watched but ignored because they got to run around and play with little to no supervision the whole time.

My daughter had asked my husband and I for months for a gym note because her leg hurt. We took her to the doctor for leg pain the first week of March where she also asked the pediatrician for a gym note. We left with a diagnoses of growing pains. One week later the gym teacher was removed from their class room and her leg pain miraculously went away. She was me at 13 as a 6 year old. She had no idea how to express her feelings but to run from it.

After that I became aware of Erin's law and within my home, my healthy home, it could've prevented two stories, two traumas.

Recently I read an article Erin Merrin posted, the created of Erin's law. Erin fought for years to pass this law in New York. She fought so hard and finally got it passed last year, so they began teaching body safety this year in their schools. After ONE presentation at an elementary school in New York, nine children came forward of sexual abuse from their principal. Nine children. He had been a principal for years, imagine how many more may come forward, and how many were prevented for the next school year.

This law saves lives and prevents trauma. You passing this this time around can prevent a child from committing suicide 15 years from now because you gave them a voice when they were most vulnerable. Our children deserve to know that they are allowed to say no to teachers, uncles, cousins, mommys and daddy's, foster parents, WHOEVER we teach them of authority but touch them in ways they shouldn't.

My main point in teaching my daughter was stranger danger, but why? Because my sexual offended wasn't a stranger, and never in a million years did I think a teacher. It can literally be anyone. It is our duty to give children a chance, a voice, to feel comfortable.

A convicted sex offender once said, a family that was open about their knowledge of sexual abuse and promoting body safety was like a burglar looking for houses to break into and seeing one with a police car out front - they would definitely not attempt to break into that house.

By passing this bill this year YOU can be a part of preventing trauma, suicide, sexual abuse. Please consider getting this law through this year, it has already slipped through the cracks too many times. I have attached many articles links of children coming forward in different states where this law has passed and how many little lives have been saved from the children who had the courage to come forward after learning about body safety starting with the New York principal.

Thank you so much for your time.

New York principal 2021

Nine children come forward after a Erins law lesson

<https://www.nbcnews.com/news/us-news/elementary-school-principal-charged-sexually-abusing-9-boys-new-york-n1264245?fbclid=IwAR2QC7i3iht7Trl0ewSdXajsXpJKxXehe6mOpM9OnFBMPrzyIMEEq-3RRXw>

Alabama Man

February 2020

Crossville man charged with sexual abuse of a child after school presentation

<https://whnt.com/news/northeast-alabama/crossville-man-charged-with-sexual-abuse-of-a->

[child/?fbclid=IwAR3oUrgS2zQ_NxZINR3zOYBHsh9J_soXqLgJZuPSGDuitOy6ZAANEoa3-Rc](https://www.starherald.com/news/local_news/testimony-underway-in-sexual-assault-trial/article_82300808-2e07-5bab-b670-6c5f06ed2a2b.html?fbclid=IwAR2e6JxHk4VRgL93RAAtQ5JcV2vWKhiTM2TmTrRa1SHllrd3wqzFgz_eqQwk)

Nebreska

February 2020

Testimony underway in sexual assault trial after child came forward from a school presentation

https://www.starherald.com/news/local_news/testimony-underway-in-sexual-assault-trial/article_82300808-2e07-5bab-b670-6c5f06ed2a2b.html?fbclid=IwAR2e6JxHk4VRgL93RAAtQ5JcV2vWKhiTM2TmTrRa1SHllrd3wqzFgz_eqQwk

Missouri

January 2020

Missouri man sentence to 30 years for assault after child told a teacher from a school presentation

<https://www.kansascity.com/news/local/crime/article239199513.html?fbclid=IwAR2f6n91ekl8wxY3j5H2q1zmKocjiUjNa-wsgqq4zUAd2046mk3bRT2iAE>

Michigan

January 2020

10 years for assaulting a 10 year old.

https://www.thealpenanews.com/news/local-news/2020/01/man-gets-10-years-for-assaulting-8-year-old/?fbclid=IwAR0mSiLvTqUzCWsiv0xUbMerBswngusOggyShLZ3JlmWWeG_72wwbRj0hw

Indiana

December 2019

Man arrested after years of abuse

https://www.14news.com/2019/11/23/affidavit-man-arrested-child-molestation-after-years-abuse/?fbclid=IwAR3wWPvcyYRpExLMmkuzZRHGH-kBZ20Zl_PeLk_yggivv9NsopKB500ibis

Indiana

October 2019

Girl Reported Sexual Abuse After Attending Body Safety Program at school

https://www.nwitimes.com/news/local/crime-and-courts/girl-reports-sex-abuse-after-attending-body-safety-program-chesterton/article_f0fe800f-65e5-595e-b1be-8fa7559280fe.html?fbclid=IwAR3bGiQNTXctwXizA5suck_y5CbbAFI3d_aBfAVgoKVUq_jIrxCNXY3tinoM

Indiana

October 2019

School Program About Reporting Abuse Leads to Child Molestation Arrest

https://www.courierpress.com/story/news/local/2019/10/29/boonville-man-charged-child-molesting-after-student-tells-teacher/2500763001/?fbclid=IwAR3Q7iK7Mb_EOW8bFCfDz7_GN0rlg6wvU4b9Ys37dsp83ASvanlOndOlnZY

South Carolina

October 2019

School Program on Reporting Abuse Leads to Arrest of Green Sea Man

https://wpde.com/news/local/hcpd-school-lesson-on-abuse-leads-to-arrest-of-green-sea-man?fbclid=IwAR3859cdNQZWU5BdFg7YwC_rBb8Mo199WYT33YE0JBEr4stE1rYI8Na5MrQ

Illinois

October 2019

Former Algonquin Based Teacher Gets 112 Year Sentence for Child Sexual Abuse

https://www.nwherald.com/2019/10/18/former-algonquin-based-school-district-300-teacher-gets-112-year-sentence-for-child-sex-assault/au8n3x3/?utm_medium=NWHFacebook&utm_source=Facebook&fbclid=IwAR3Mv_23fMvar703Omfaqtvg0Vxhl2xqBSLrWkAXiydOTRte5GyV7J

Pennsylvania

April 2019

School Presentation leads to Arrest of Man Suspected of Child Abuse

https://www.wtae.com/article/school-presentation-leads-to-arrest-of-man-suspected-of-child-abuse/27116733?fbclid=IwAR2ttSJkiJSqV_8fxHjBIpddUzkdeVNjsidUe7M0KGFFAeiGsbx3EbAyvyI

Indiana

January 2019

Anderson Couple Arrested After Body Safety Talk

https://www.heraldbulletin.com/news/local_news/anderson-couple-arrested-after-body-safety-talk-at-apa/article_4c52b042-1b86-11e9-a02e-ef66abb8fba9.html?fbclid=IwAR0SUNFhNN91ERNi47mb0u_Zhc4d4GXoQGkK5DZM4kIAYacwIjEhd2vOsCg

Oregon

December 2018

After Cop Gives Talk at Portland School Girl Confides she has Been Abused.

<https://www.oregonlive.com/news/2018/12/after-cop-gives-talk-at-portland-school-girl-confides-shes-been-raped.html>

South Carolina

February 28, 2018

South Carolina man 25 years in prison after 4th grader discloses sexual abuse during presentation

<http://www.wyff4.com/article/sex-offender-told-victims-their-parents-wouldnt-love-them-if-they-reported-abuse-ag-says/18924739>

Maryland

August 2017

Maryland Teacher sentenced to 48 years in prison for molesting several students over 15 years. 12 year old reported abuse during Erin's Law

presentation. https://www.washingtonpost.com/local/education/he-was-warned-about-getting-too-close-to-students-but-this-maryland-teacher-was-allowed-to-stay-in-the-classroom/2017/08/25/5ac2ad76-7bbe-11e7-a669-b400c5c7e1cc_story.html?utm_term=.e491f5634992

Illinois

February 2017

Illinois Police arrested 54-year-old Timothy Zielinski. They say he sexually abused a family member who came forward about her abuse, just hours after going through Erin's

Law. <http://www.wifr.com/content/news/Body-safety-classes-helping-to-change-lives-414126323.html>

South Carolina

July 2017

Hilton Man Accused of Sexual Conduct with 10 year old.

<http://www.islandpacket.com/news/local/crime/article161764238.html?fbclid=IwAR04ZtW1jFnXKrd8Xf4SoWCKOgnA-NOu2UBujaMgr4kG5sQe0fdaZ0FCLgE>

Virginia

March 2017

Virginia Three adults arrested after school district taught personal body safety.

<http://www.fox5dc.com/news/local-news/elementary-school-sexual-abuse-prevention-program-helps-lead-to-arrest-of-prince-william-county-man>

Virginia

October 2016

Two kids report sexual abuse after viewing educational video in Virginia School

https://wjla.com/news/local/2-kids-report-sexual-abuse-after-viewing-educational-video-in-va-school?fbclid=IwAR01fhQpmqJSeHVLFuoz-LPG_0gC-DjThr4LUdWizZkywAJeiSnEP7rAjSc

Illinois

November 2016

Illinois man held on 2.5 million bond for Arlington Heights man charged with sexual abuse.

<http://www.dailyherald.com/article/20160520/news/160529807/>

Wisconsin

November 2016

Former Wisconsin corrections officer accused of assault boy.

Wisconsin man arrested for sexual abuse after boy reported he was abused to teacher after he watched a video on what to do if you are being

abused. <http://www.wisn.com/article/former-waukesha-corrections-officer-accused-of-assaulting-boy/6318607>

Illinois

September 2016

Child Reported Abuse After Program at School

http://thetelegraph.com/news/90089/testimony-child-reported-abuse-after-watching-program-at-school?fbclid=IwAR0LdlaONt9dZzq_5n8hX71dpT2pngOR4MvKQ8-_37kgMZgCnYIVPpsPbZ4

Illinois

August 2016

Lisle man sentenced to 40 years in prison for sexually abusing girlfriend's daughter from age of 3-7yrs old. Girl told her teacher immediately after being taught Erin's

Law. <http://www.fox32chicago.com/news/crime/lisle-man-gets-40-years-for-for-sexually-assaulting-young-girl>

Alabama

May 2015

9-year-old comes forward about sexual abuse after school presentation.

<https://www.waff.com/story/29157044/police-9-year-old-comes-forward-about-sexual-abuse-after-school-presentation/>

South Carolina

January 2014

Lesson on good touch bad touch leads to arrest.

<https://www.nydailynews.com/news/national/class-lesson-good-touch-bad-touch-leads-arrests-article-1.1571452>

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