

Am. HB105 (Erin's Law)

Kristin DeWitt

Proponent Testimony

When I was 13, I had my first relationship. I was excited. The boy ended up being abusive, emotionally, physically, and sexually. I didn't know what sexual abuse was at that age, I just knew something was not right with the way he was touching me. When I was in 8th grade, I was called a slut and a whore because people heard that I did things with guys. This was not the case, they just felt they could grab and touch. I still didn't think much of except now I was diagnosed with depression, was cutting myself and had attempted suicide. My freshman year of high school I had managed to rack up a lot of dentations and my mom could not always pick me up. I asked a friend who was my ex from 8th grade for a ride. When we were in 8th grade we were very into to PDA. I assumed his mom was picking us up. But it was an older kid and another ex of mine go finger. In the car they were smoking, and I wanted a hit. I could only get one if I showed them my boobs. So, I did, this apparently was an open invitation to try and take my clothes off and do what they wanted with me. Both guys who I had once trusted and wrote cute notes to were now trying to take my pants off while grabbing everything. The driver even tried to get a feel. I'm surprised we didn't wreck. I was able to keep squirming and kicking so they couldn't go much further than molestation...thank God. But I still felt dirty. I went home and took the most violent shower ever. And then had a huge fight with my folks over something stupid and lashed out. The next day I got called to the principal office. My friend who I told what happened to me reported it. The boys were expelled and missed the next few band competitions. I felt ashamed and tainted and episodes like these and worse would continue till I was in my late 20s.

If I had a program like Erin's law maybe I would have been about to talk to my parents, the first time the 13yr touched me

inappropriately. If not, then maybe it would have given me the tools so I could understand what happened and how I can talk to someone about it. It would have helped me to not feel so gross and dirty and teach me that it was not my fault. With Erin's Law in schools, kids don't have to live in silence for years with these secrets that they carry from when they were teenagers. They would know that just because you showed your breast it does not mean that you asked for it. It would also help break the cycle before it starts. If I was taught Erin's Law when I was younger, I may not have put myself in those awful situations as an adult.'

I do work with an organization called A Voice for The Innocent. We are a nonprofit where people can tell their stories of sexual abuse on our site with no judgement and are met with compassion and validation. I have been with the since 2018 and have had the pleasure of meeting a bunch of amazing people, most survivors. A bunch of them have told me that it was their first time saying what happened to them to anyone and that person was me while I was tableling an event. A lot of the people were survivors of child sexual trauma. I think what would have been different in their stories if they had this program growing up.

I am now 33 and I am a 2x rape survivor and a survivor of domestic violence. I am getting my bachelor's in social work so I can work in prevention and help kids, be there for them and give them those tools that I didn't have to navigate all the horrors of being a teenager. I am really pushing that Ohio finally passes Erin's law because our kids' futures depend on it. And we can do right by them and hopefully begin to help end this epidemic of sexual abuse.

Kristin DeWitt she/her/hers