Proponent Testimony

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Chairman Bacon, Vice Chairman Dolan, and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee: My name is Jennah Strader, and I appreciate the opportunity to offer testimony in support of Senate Bill 235 to provide my husband, Josh, an opportunity to get off the register of sex offenders.

I would like to be there in person, but I am on bedrest with my fourth child with Josh as the father. I am due to be induced this week. I was 14, almost 15, when I met Josh at church. He was 19 at the time. A friend of mine had introduced us. We had a lot in common and had the same hobbies, so we hit it off.

Our age was never a thing, it was something that never came up until we had spent time together, and by then it didn’t really matter. We had already established a good relationship by then. My mom was aware of the age difference and didn’t feel it was an issue because she had spent time with Josh and knew he was a good kid. Josh lived with his grandparents, who knew about the age difference, too.

Josh never pressured me to do anything; if anything, it was the other way around. He was raised with the value that you don’t have sex before marriage. I was raised in a much different home and did not have the same values.

We ended up having sex anyway and I ended up pregnant. At the time, I was seeing a counselor, and when the counselor found out that I was pregnant, she was required by law to report it (even though she knew Josh wasn’t a bad kid). I still see the counselor to this day, and she still thinks Josh is a good guy and an amazing father and hates that he has to be on the registry.

Despite Josh’ age, we were both kids. I was probably more mature, but we were both young and didn’t realize that the choice we had made would affect Josh for the rest of his life. We didn’t realize how much it would affect our children’s lives and how much they would suffer from something that happened when we were teenagers.

Because of his registration, Josh cannot go to school for parent/ teacher conferences; he cannot coach soccer or baseball or attend school plays that our children are in. Recently, our school had a father/ daughter dance. He could not go. It broke my daughter’s heart.

We have had to move several times, the last time being six months ago. The house we were renting, which was the only one who would rent to us, had rats. We lived there as long as we could, but no one else would rent to us because of Josh’ registration. Our landlord finally bought another house. We had to make sure it wasn’t too close to a school, but we were lucky and have moved in.

I request the members of this committee vote in favor of Senate Bill 235 to allow my husband, Josh, to petition for removal from the register, to allow him to finally be a part of the lives of his children.

Thank you for the opportunity to address this committee and its members.