

Senate Bill 17

Wednesday, July 17

Good morning. I'd like to thank the Judiciary Committee for allowing me the honor of addressing you this morning regarding Senate Bill 17. This would not be possible without the support of Senator Yuko who, along with Senators Maharath, Kunze, Williams, Craig, Fedor, O'Brien and Sykes co-sponsored this Bill to protect the privacy rights of rape and domestic violence victims. Thank you all for this opportunity to share my story as you consider this Bill. Currently, there is no laws protecting the privacy of victims of sexual assault or domestic violence in publicly available databases. I know that we have many members of this commission have worked within the criminal justice system as police officer, prosecutor and even corrections/probation / parole officer so you have seen the entire process of reporting, prosecuting and punishing crime. You have also seen the victims of these crimes in that process as well. You've seen what a traumatic incident can do to a person and how invasive and grueling the process is. Please help us hold on to some shred of dignity and privacy during this process.

A little over two years ago, on May 17, 2017, I was thrust into this grueling, demoralizing, embarrassing, lengthy process that will test the resolve of even the strongest person. I woke up to my neighbor raping me. He took every shred of confidence, dignity, sanity, and most importantly, my life from me. It just stopped in that moment. I went through the necessary questions, rape kit, statement and all of the necessary reporting steps while on auto pilot just trying to breathe and put one foot in front of the other. I spent the next week numb and dumb from shock.

But then I had to start doing some research to learn more about the process and what was ahead of me. I needed to get a copy of my police report and a quick and simple search pulled it up. Anybody could see it. Any potential employer, family member – anyone could see that I was raped. A simple google search and the most intimate, soul sucking crime out there and anyone would know. This is a problem on a number of levels.

First, as victims to such crimes, we already have issues with reporting. The National Justice Institute reported that as many as 64% of the victims **do not report.** That statistic is shocking. That same report stated that self-blame or guilt, shame, humiliation, or a desire to keep the assault private were the most

cited reasons for not reporting. Help us retain our privacy and dignity during the reporting process so that we reduce the afore-mentioned feelings, increase reporting and get more violent criminals off the street.

Secondly, society still stigmatizes us - rape victims. Without doubt, the question of promiscuity, wardrobe, sobriety, or honesty come up when a victim is public about her story. We are vilified when we come forward. We are aware of the many recent high profile cases but a simple perusal of the comments in any story regarding rape and you'll see the victim blaming and shaming. Now, anyone can do a simple search and find the information which could be used to bully, intimidate or malign another in any number of situations both professionally and personally.

Google and social media searches are becoming more prevalent as employers consider candidates. Will a potential employer have a bias and ask himself these questions? Will a potential employer think a recent rape victim could be a liability? We'd like to think that this isn't possible but we can't deny that victim shaming and blaming does not exist.

Will someone you disagree with on the internet find it and release your information online in an effort to bully or trigger a victim?

These are realistic scenarios. There is no reason for the general public, a potential employer or anyone know this detail about a victim unless the victim chooses to tell that party.

Again, I had incredible support so it was easier for me to speak up and share my story but not everyone has that support and I'm asking you to protect their privacy during such a frail and broken time as they begin the difficult process of healing.