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## **Opposition Testimony Substitute House Bill 459**

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chairwoman White, Ranking Member Leland, Leader Seitz, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee: my name is Tina Fillinger, and I appreciate the opportunity to testify today in opposition to Substitute House Bill 459.

I am testifying as an advocate, as a mom, and as a retired elementary school counselor. This is my experience. In the 1980's when I began my career, part of our classroom guidance curriculum included teaching children about Stranger Danger. We thought we were clever using a term which rhymed. And we thought this is what we needed to teach in order to keep our children safe. As a society and as individuals, we continue to evolve. We now know that children do not truly understand the concept of a stranger. It is difficult for children to discern the difference between strangers who can hurt them and strangers who can help them. We know for a fact that child abduction by strangers is rare. According to The National Center for Missing and Exploited Children (NCMEC), non-family abductions make up only one percent of the missing children cases reported to NCMEC. The Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network (RAINN) is the nation's largest anti-sexual violence organization. They report that 93% of juvenile victims knew the perpetrator, and only 7% were strangers. Telling kids not to talk to strangers fails to protect them at a basic level. But, it's always easier to blame the faceless stranger than to confront domestic violence, incest, and other abuse.

Making more laws to isolate persons on the registry does not protect children. We all talk about families first. Are we putting families first when we don't allow a child's father or mother from becoming involved in their children's school and extracurricular activities? Are we embracing the concept of family when we allow our children to be faced with shame and ridicule because their parent is on the registry and not allowed to volunteer their expertise and service at a critical time in their children's lives? I have seen first-hand how harmful and how hurtful this can be for our children. And I have seen that this kind of law would do nothing to help anyone's children.

I spent my entire career protecting children. We all want our children to be safe from harm. This law will give a false sense of security and cause undue harm to families.

I implore you to reconsider the benefit of a law such as Sub HB 459.

Thank you for listening. I will try to answer any questions at this time.