

Kathaleen H. Weyer
10016 Somerset Drive
Loveland, Ohio 45140

October 3, 2021

Chair Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and Members of the Ohio Senate Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

Thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony in support of HB105; legislation that will require schools to provide abuse prevention education to children and youth.

Now retired, I volunteer my time to address sexual abuse prevention efforts through education of adults, and to advocate for efforts to ensure that the next generations of children have the information and knowledge that can better enable them to speak out sooner when abuse occurs and avoid the entrapments of predatory behavior. I have volunteered my time as a trained facilitator of adult prevention education with programs such as Darkness to Lights “Stewards of Children” and the “Virtus” program used within many churches. These alone are not enough. While it is every adult’s responsibility to protect our children, we also need to educate our children early about the signs of grooming and safe personal boundaries.

A school can be an appropriate and safe option for ensuring that children are given abuse prevention information in a child friendly environment. I have been encouraged and seen first-hand the positive messaging and information that is available through child abuse prevention programs such as the “Kids on the Block” and the classroom presentations of the Child Abuse Council of Ohio. Unfortunately, the use of these programs is not reaching the vast majority of our children.

For over 25 years I worked as a therapist in the mental health field with children and teens, many of them victims of sexual abuse. Their journey from victim to survivor was most often tenuous and fraught with setbacks and frustration. Suicidal ideation, substance abuse, school failure, dysfunctional personal relationships, family chaos, joblessness and homelessness often follow sexual abuse. The damaging mental, physical and emotional traumas of sexual battery, rape and sexual abuse and misconduct in all its forms are most often life-long. Preventing such tragic harm is critically important for our society’s well-being.

The time, effort and financial costs of providing school based prevention education is minimal compared to the extreme personal suffering, and negative consequences of not addressing the problem.

I ask that you exercise your legislative powers to endorse HB 105 and make every effort to ensure its passage into law.

Thank you.

Kathaleen Weyer

OH Licensed Social Worker

