

## **Testimony of Mujaddid Muhammad**

Honorable Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,

I address you today to fervently advocate for the passage of House Bill 35 (HB 35). My plea is underscored by a deeply personal and troubling narrative, one that reflects the urgency and significance of this legislation.

More than four decades ago, at the tender age of nine, I endured the traumatic ordeal of sexual assault and molestation as a child in the Boy Scouts. My victimization unfolded over an agonizing three-month period, during which I was subjected to threats, intimidation, and psychological manipulation to secure my silence. This ordeal was brought to a close when my step-father, attuned to the Scout Leader's disturbing behavior that included inappropriate attire for me, terminated our association. Fearing for my family's safety due to the threats made by the perpetrator, I maintained silence regarding the abuse until I reached the age of 25.

However, the impact of this harrowing experience was far-reaching and insidious. Its consequences began to manifest themselves as early as the age of 12, propelling me into a tumultuous cycle of delinquency, repeated encounters with the juvenile justice system, and ultimately, being tried as an adult. My journey included a four-year sentence in state prison and, following my release, a subsequent 32-year federal prison sentence. It was within the confines of these institutions that I initiated the arduous process of confronting my traumatic past and the self-destructive tendencies it had spawned.

It is with a heavy heart that I acknowledge that my story is not a unique one. Approximately 80,000 individuals share similar accounts of enduring childhood trauma, with consequences that rival or surpass my own. I implore this Committee to grasp a fundamental truth: while we stand

before you today as adults, advocating for the passage of HB 35, we were all children when these heinous crimes were committed against us. Many among you are parents and grandparents, cherishing the innocence and vulnerability of children; it is imperative to recognize that we were once those very children. When the innocence of a child is desecrated through acts of molestation, there should exist no statute of limitations that shields the perpetrators from accountability.

Moreover, the nature of trauma is such that it frequently compels survivors to remain silent for years, as witnessed in the experiences of many men I have encountered as part of the Scouts Honor community, including myself. I beseech you not to penalize us for the protracted period it took us to summon the courage to share our painful narratives.

Time is of the essence, with just eight days remaining to pass HB 35 through the Senate. This legislation is our collective endeavor to ensure equitable settlements for Ohio's Boy Scout Survivors, commensurate with those afforded survivors in other states. I implore you to rectify this profound injustice by casting your vote in favor of HB 35 within the limited timeframe we have at our disposal.

In heartfelt gratitude for your consideration,

Mujaddid Muhammad