

May 6, 2013

Good afternoon members of the House on Judiciary Committee,

My name is Shannon Jones and I am here in support of House Bill 3509. I am a teacher, mother and a survivor. I am very much in support of sexual offenders seeking and getting counseling, therapy and all the support that might allow them to reenter society. However, having said that, I don't believe these facilities should be located near areas where children often congregate.

Many of these programs operate outside regular school or business hours in order to accommodate the needs of the offenders, not necessarily to the protection of the innocent.

As a teacher I often see children on our school grounds, after school hours, playing. Many come to play on the equipment we have and to socialize with friends. To see them laughing and having fun makes me smile, right up to the point I realize, I am the only adult around; I don't see their parents or what appears to be a supervising adult. I have often gone out and asked, "Where is your mom or dad?" The response has been, "Working..." There are many young children who come home to an empty house to then spend several hours hanging out at our school. This is a reality for many young children. On weekends I have gone to school to work and see a lone child either waiting for others or just plain by themselves. These are the ones that really worry me.

Sex offenders are often opportunistic in their attacks; striking when the victim is most vulnerable or unsuspecting. Schools are thought to be safe places for them to play and with these programs located nearby that might not be the case.

You might ask, "Why are you worried about these kids?" Well, less than 500 feet from our school's fence line (we actually share the fence), a church is busing registered sex offenders and other criminals in for a service called Light My Way. The Church did not inform families this service was taking place or that there just needed to be heightened awareness..

Bridget Sickon, Portland police sex offender coordinator stated in the Oregonian, "Oregon isn't as tough on sex offenders as many other states." As a result many are seeing an increase in the number of sex offenders moving here. In addition, national data shows Oregon either first or

second (behind Delaware) for the number of registered sex offender residents per capita. I know people will say that sex offenders are the smallest population of criminals we have and that their rate of reoffending is only 12% but with an increase in numbers there is an increase in risk. Furthermore, if we put an actual number with it, it means a little more. It means that for every 100 registered sex offenders, 12 will reoffend. Do you want to gamble on those 12 having easy access to the most vulnerable?

As a 9 year old child I suffered and survived being sexually attacked. The scares on me physically healed very quickly but emotionally it is still a battle. The trauma of it all left me feeling unloved, scared and lonely. I thought I had done something wrong and that I was the one at fault. Because of those feelings waited several years to tell my family. In fact it was not until I was an adult and had a child of my own, that I sought treatment and told my family. In an instant my life was irrevocably changed. I was not the one who made the choice to take my innocents away but that of my offender. I do not want to see another child go through the pain and suffer I did just because we as a society think; "It is only 12%." That 12% are still a part of the larger group seeking assistance in areas that children are most vulnerable. Please help House Bill 3509 so that another innocent person's life is not changed without their consent.

Thank you,



Shannon Jones