

When we really sit down to think about what it is we are talking about, we are talking about a bill that is not only going to empower victims to come forward, but a bill that is going to clear out the grey area for situations that are already lacking in black and white. If a teacher, doctor, counselor, or other "mandatory reporter" hears about an assault situation, that individual should be required to report it. Period. End of conversation. As a student who has not only witnessed, but also experienced the realities of how assault victims are overlooked and ignored by school educators, staff, and administrators because they're "told to," it is so scary to think that the places that I spent 14 years of my childhood in are not all that safe.

I am a student. I know what it is like. I live the life daily. I endorse this bill and will continue to fight for it until it is passed. When I read the words shared by those who "do not endorse this bill" they are by private school educators, administrators, and those who simply do not want to have to follow the rules because they like playing by their own. I know that this is not a fight of public school versus private school, but it feels like it. I have spent 16 years in private catholic school education. I know what it is like I know what happens behind those closed doors. It is very interesting that every single person that is "opposed" to the bill is a member of the private school community.

We need to keep the kids safe. We need to keep the children safe. We need to allow teachers the ability to defend and protect their children. I have witnessed first hand teachers being informed to not report "because it has already been handled" when in reality it was not. This is truth. This is private catholic education.

As students, our teachers want to equip us for life, give us skills and tools to make it in the "real world," so why would we not want to equip them with the defense and tools to protect us while we are in their world?

This bill is the difference between a victim coming forward and not. This bill is the difference between someone who was assaulted feeling believed or not. This bill gives that girl who was assaulted just a little more fight in her to speak her truth and take back the power that was ripped from her by someone who thought they could do what they want. This bill could literally mean the difference between someone living and someone not. This seems dramatic and drastic but it is.

Victims of sexual assault account for over 50% of suicides committed by women according to the National Library of Medicine. What if the victim was heard? What if the victim was valued? What if the victim was believed?

We are in 2021. This is a matter of protecting the kids, as a kid, as someone's son, I would hope my dad would want me to be protected by his fellow educators.