

Written Testimony

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Bill: 1296

Date: 3/5/2020

My testimony has been emailed to Meghan MacKillop. Thank you. It is also attached here.

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Representing	WINGS	
Position on Bill:	<input checked="" type="radio"/> For	<input type="radio"/> Against
	<input type="radio"/> Neutral	<input type="radio"/>

Good afternoon Mister Chair and members of the committee. My name Jenny Stith, and I am speaking as executive director of WINGS, an organization that supports the 1 in 5 adults who were sexually abused as children and their loved ones. I'm also speaking as a survivor of childhood sexual abuse myself.

I strongly support this bill. I want to address the long-term implications of childhood sexual abuse – in the lives of adult survivors.

As has been mentioned, the average age for a child to be sexually abused is 9 years old. That's a second or third grader. For me, I was 10.

The average age for a person who has been sexually abused to come forward is 52. That's 43 years *past* the age of 9 – and 34 years *past* the age of 18.

I want to share with you what usually happens to survivors during those 34 - 43 years.

Children who are sexually abused are manipulated by people they trust while their brain is still developing. This creates what is called developmental trauma. Their ability to identify manipulative or abusive behavior in other circumstances becomes injured.

Thus, child victims of sexual abuse are 3 times *more likely* to be re-victimized through intimate partner violence and additional rape and sexual assault in their adolescent *and* adult years. This compounds their trauma. Additionally, victims of CSA are highly prone to:

- Addictions of alcohol, drugs, food, gambling or pornography;
- Eating disorders;
- Depression, anxiety, PTSD and related psychological disorders; and
- Suicide

It is typical that these challenges become so severe in an adult survivor's life, that they finally begin looking back to understand what happened and how they can begin to put the pieces of their life back together. *This* is the point at which survivors need our greatest support – not yet another roadblock to their healing.

Childhood sexual abuse is a crime. For good reason. It is the second *costliest* crime, in terms of impact to its victims – next to murder. Adult survivors of CSA need specialized, long-term counseling and support group options, in addition to an array of other healing services. Therapy and medical costs can quickly add up to tens of thousands of dollars and more. During recovery, survivors may face challenges with work productivity. The average loss of income per survivor is estimated to be in excess of \$200,000, and I would say this estimate is actually *low*. Survivors face *astounding* financial hardships in their lives as a direct result of the abuse they experienced. They have *no way* to sue their perpetrator and be given a fair chance to recoup any sliver of the costs they've endured.

Meanwhile, perpetrators of abuse often get off scott free. The current civil statute of limitations is *woefully* inadequate for virtually *all* adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse. The people it most protects, however-are those who abuse children & adults - and the institutions who enable abusers.

I ask you to change this egregious reality today and stand *with* children and with all of us adults who were sexually abused *as children* – by passing HB 20-1296. Thank you.