



Western Kansas Child Advocacy Center
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Chairman Jennings and Members of the Committee, thank you for the opportunity to share my support of HB 2048 regarding Erin's Law. I am Kelly Robbins, Executive Director of the Western Kansas Child Advocacy Center (WKCAC) serving 32 rural and frontier counties in western Kansas.

Erin's law is important for one reason, our children, our most precious commodity. Society may not want to believe that children of all ages are being raped and molested on a daily basis, but I am here to tell you otherwise. At the Western Kansas Child Advocacy Center we work with children every day, whose stories keep us up at night. Last year alone we saw 370 children, that is more than one a day, and that is in the most rural and frontier counties of Kansas. We hear from these children the same story that Erin Merryn tells in her books. In fact when Erin came to Scott City in 2013 and spoke to our middle and high school, we had 5 children come forward and disclose sexual abuse. One young girl said "She is talking about my life". The dynamics that children experience with sexual abuse are seen in almost every one of our cases: secrecy, helplessness, accommodation to survive, delayed or unconvincing disclosures.

I have heard over and over, "I was little, I didn't know it was wrong". Erin's Law will let them know that what is happening or if it happens is wrong! Child after child has said "I didn't know who to tell" or "I was afraid they wouldn't believe me". Erin's law will let the children know who to turn to and where to get help. And more cases than I can count or want to remember, is this story, one that still haunts me today is about a 13 year old who had been abused for 10 years by her biological father in her home. She finally couldn't take it anymore and told some of her friends, but did not want them to tell anyone. Luckily, they felt they needed to tell and went to a teacher, unfortunately they had to go to THREE teachers before someone did something. Erin's Law will educate, yearly, teachers on what sexual abuse is, what to do for the child and about mandate reporting. It is up to the teachers to help save these children and they need to be prepared for it.

As an Agent for the Kansas Bureau of Investigation I worked mainly violent crimes, but I can tell you that as far as I am concerned child sexual abuse is the most devastating crime committed and as one Judge so aptly stated, "For the victim, it is a lifelong sentence."

I feel that the issue at stake with this bill, is do we want to commit to keeping our children safe? As a mother I know I will do anything it takes for my child, I hope you will too. Thank you so much for your consideration of this bill and thank you for thinking of all the children in Kansas.