

HB – 2739 – Opponent Testimony of Robert Cox, MA, LPC, NCC
Life Recovery Consulting, February 28, 2018

Chairman Jennings and honorable members of the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee I am writing in opposition of HB - 2739 the legislation removing the protection for specific minors from registering as sex offender on the Kanas sex offenders registry.

This bill is fundamentally flawed in its assumptions that:

- Children have the ability to think through their actions – The prefrontal cortex (the part of the brain used in reasoning) of a child does not even begin developing until their adolescent years and is not fully developed until the 20's. Before then decisions they make are not well thought out and generally flawed. This is why we have adults to regulate them.
- Children who act out sexually are predators -The point above needs to be considered in that predation is an act that is often planned. Children who act out in this fashion are generally trying to exert some form of control because of the internal confusion they are experiencing. Often their acting out is a way of trying to make sense of a world that has been abusive to them in one way or another.
- Punishment is an effective deterrent – Research flies in the face of this view actually. You are dealing with children who are already convinced they are “bad” and when you punish them you simply reinforce that view. Education and support are much more effective.

In addition to the above myths, when you attach a label to a child that will follow them into adulthood, you rob them of the ability to be something different in society. You are saying that who that child is will necessarily be who the adult is. I implore you to think about who you were as a child. Are you the same now? I would hope you have grown and become wiser. If you trap the adult in a world of labels gained as children it will also rob them of access to resources they will need, I guarantee that you will create more problems the society you are trying to make better.

The research, data and common sense will tell you that this is bad legislation. If you have any questions please feel free to contact me.