



HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES

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TESTIMONY OF REPRESENTATIVE JOYCE A. MAKER

IN SUPPORT OF L.D. 95

Resolve, To Create the Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children

Before the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services

Date of Public Hearing: February 13, 2013

Senator Craven, Representative Farnsworth and distinguished members of the Joint Standing Committee on Health and Human Services, I am Representative Joyce A. Maker, representing House District 31, which includes the towns of Baileyville, Baring, Calais, Charlotte, Indian Township, Perry, Pleasant Point and Robbinston.

I am here today to present L.D. 95, "Resolve, To Create the Task Force on the Prevention of Sexual Abuse of Children." Some of you may remember that I presented this bill last year as L.D. 1705. The previous committee voted a unanimous Ought to Pass as Amended. This current bill is the same amended bill. You may ask why it is back here. I was informed by a staff member from the Office of Policy and Legal Analysis that there was a delay in appointments to the task force, resulting in time constraints in completing the work needed to further the bill.

I am providing you a CD with the testimony from last year's public hearing because it was difficult to ask the speakers to make another sacrifice by sharing their testimonies once again. Instead, I will be reading you parts of their testimonies and you can listen to the rest on the CD.

This is a very important issue to survivors throughout Maine. A similar bill has been passed in nine states - Illinois, Indiana, Missouri, Mississippi, Michigan, Nebraska, New York, Pennsylvania and Maine (up seven since I presented last year) - and is being considered in the following states: Connecticut (voting this week), Georgia, Iowa, Maryland, Minnesota, Nebraska, New Mexico, Nevada and Tennessee.

According to the Maine Coalition Against Sexual Abuse, "One of every seven victims of sexual assault is under the age of six." According to pupil counts by the Department of Education, 44,573 kids are in k-2 and 1/7th (6,368) of that number have likely experienced some kind of sexual abuse. We cannot hesitate to act on a problem that affects the safety of our children.

District 31 Baileyville, Baring, Calais, Charlotte, Passamaquoddy Indian Township, Passamaquoddy Pleasant Point, Perry and Robbinston, plus part of the unorganized territory of North Washington

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One argument for inaction that many in our society make is the belief that sexual abuse is best handled by the family and does not need to be a public issue. What do you do, however, when sexual abuse occurs within the family? Almost 50% of juvenile victims reported that their abusers were family members. The second argument for inaction is that the economy/budget will not support another task force. Can we in good conscience allow more children to live unprotected and tortured because we were unwilling to make the necessary sacrifice?

There are differences in regard to curriculum choices to "Get the Job Done." Some curriculum choices that I have heard are the following: "Stop it Now," "Good Touch, Bad Touch," "Talking about Touching," "Childhelp Speak Up Be Safe" and "Lifeskills." It is my belief that the best way to decide on content instruction for our students is to allow for a group of experts to gather, as this bill calls for. The intent of this bill is to create a panel that will identify the best-researched, most appropriate, age-based curriculum for children pre-k to fifth-grade. I am more than willing to listen to suggestions, but just choosing without the knowledge of experts doesn't seem to be the right course of action.

Before I end here today, I would like to leave you with the following message from Erin Merryn, a survivor of sexual abuse. "As a child I never had to take cover because of a real tornado. I never had to stop, drop, and roll or run out of a burning building. I never had to evacuate a school bus due to an emergency, but I had the knowledge to know what to do if any of those situations happened. Where was the drill on how to escape a child molester? Where was the lesson plan on sexual abuse, safe touches, and safe secrets? It never came. I was not educated on "How to Tell Today or How to Get Away." I was never educated on "My Body Belongs to Me." When a grown man lay on top of me at 6 1/2 years old and threaten to tie me to a bed if I did not lay still and be quiet as he raped me or when my teenage cousin locked me behind closed doors and warned me, "this is our little secret, no one will believe you, this will destroy our family" as he sexually abused me on a bed I stayed silent. When I was raped and sexually abused as a child I did not know what to do. My body seemed to belong to the men that used and abused it was the message I learned, because I was getting no other message."

I also want to share a little bit of what my heroes said last year and hopefully it will entice you to listen to the CD I presented to you before the workshop.

Senator Debra Plowman

"My sexual abuse started as a very young child and it involved pornography, child pornography and lots of secrets and I know that my teachers could see that there was something wrong and they would ask but they never asked the right questions. I wanted so badly for someone to ask me the right questions."

Kayla Garriott

"My abuse started when I was 10 years old. I never once learned in school what was inappropriate versus appropriate touch. I was taught Stranger Danger. Realistically that isn't the case anymore. Only 7 percent of children are reported to be victimized by a stranger. So from the time I was 10 until the time I was 17, I was sexually abused by my father. The abuse started as he told me that I was helping him with a medical problem."

Robin Garriott Bouchard

"My daughter, Kayla Garriott, endured 7 years of rape, abuse and incest at the hands of her biological father. Her father and I were not together at the time. He abused her on the weekends he had her. I

didn't know what signs were to look for, so therefore, I didn't look for any. I have done nothing but to educate myself since I found her journal."

Susan Johnson

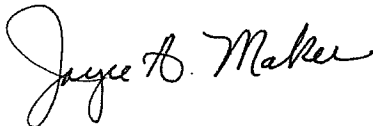
"I am a survivor of incest- notice I didn't say victim. I am a survivor today. My abuse started fifteen years ago and it is as real today as although it just happened last night. It never goes away. I endured many years of abuse. It started at a young age and continued for 16 years."

Marcia Hayward

"The story of my abuse began when I believe I was about eight years old. My father left me in care of a family member. I was home from school sick and I was wearing my most very favorite little girl nightdress cause I was so sick and it made me feel so pretty. I can see it now it was pink, lace, with ruffles and very, very girly. While my dad was out, my uncle sexually abused me. While he did that, he explained to me if I told anyone that my father would kill him. I believed it. I didn't want my dad to go to jail. So when my father returned, I retreated to the shower and scrubbed my body raw with a fingernail brush. I went to my bedroom and I took the scissors to my beautiful little nighty and threw it in the garbage."

Thank you for your time. If I can provide any additional information for you, please let me know.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Joyce A. Maker". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above the typed name.

Joyce A. Maker
State Representative