

Kathleen Wrigley, MS, LICSW

Re: House Bill No. 1387

Good morning, Chairman and Members of the Judiciary Committee. My name is Kathleen Wrigley. I am a Licensed Independent Clinical Social Worker and a school counselor at Shiloh Christian School, here in Bismarck.

You will hear from an impressive group of individuals who support House Bill 1387. Lawyers, mental health professionals and advocates will attempt to persuade you to vote in favor of this Bill. Perhaps the most authentic and brave witnesses are the victims who will share their stories with you. Please listen to them with your hearts. You will also hear from one of the most decorated and proficient trauma psychologists in North Dakota, Dr. Tami De Coteau.

I know victims. I know victims' families. I know children. I know what trauma does to child victims. And I know the criminal justice system. I know that there are kinks in the system.

My brother, Police Officer Danny Boyle, was a 21-year-old rookie Philadelphia Police Officer when he was shot and killed in the line of duty by a man who was set free from the prison system in Philadelphia. At the time of his release, he wasn't deemed violent enough and set free because of the overcrowded prison system. He was out for a handful of weeks when he shot and killed a man over drugs. Two weeks later, my brother, Danny, stopped him for a traffic violation. This man fired 13 shots into the cab of the police car. The second of those 13 bullets penetrated Danny's brain. Danny died two days later. Two murders in a matter of several weeks because of a breakdown in the criminal justice system. My parents and I were dragged through the criminal justice system for 25 years, for unending appeals.

You might ask yourself, "What on earth does this have to do with North Dakota, House Bill 1387, or the statute of limitations on reporting child sexual abuse?"

Since my brother's murder, I have spent my entire adult life advocating for the rights and protections of crime victims. I was a victim advocate in the Homicide Unit of the Philadelphia

District Attorney's Office. I was Director of the Child Advocacy Center in Bismarck, ND, and— at the time--was one of only two trained forensic interviewers of suspected child abuse in the state of North Dakota. Currently, I am a school counselor at Shiloh Christian School, here in Bismarck.

I am trained, both professionally and personally, to know victims, particularly child victims.

Children who suffer from the trauma of sexual abuse are handed a life sentence. It is not uncommon for a “delayed disclosure.” If you close your eyes and open your hearts, imagine the cross a child shoulders from this type of hurt: there's fear of the abuser, a power that an abuser has over a child, an innocence stolen coupled with a complete lack of capacity for understanding their abuse, a panic that no one will believe them, a lack of trust that adults and/will keep them safe, the shame and blame, and the burden of knowing that telling someone might tear their family apart, in some instances.

I am here today to urge you to carefully consider, judicially deliberate, and then courageously support victims, specifically for the extension of the statute of limitations for prosecuting sexual abuse, in House Bill 1387.

Thank you for your time and commitment to stand with child victims of crime.