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H.B. 233: Testimony in Support

Esther Smith [smith.l.esther@gmail.com]

To: [Rep. Lynn Gattis](#)

Cc: [Rep. Geran Tarr](#)

Thursday, March 27, 2014 7:40 PM

Dear Chair Gattis,

I stand strongly in support of H.B. 233, which relates to sexual abuse and sexual assault awareness and prevention efforts in public schools throughout the state of Alaska.

Legislation of this strength, scope, and content is long overdue in this state. We know that violence is a learned behavior, which means that we can prevent it from occurring with proper, comprehensive education policies. "Erin's Law" seeks to fill a much needed gap within our education system by recognizing the need for mandatory training and awareness on the subjects of sexual abuse and sexual assault.

As a young adult who has spent the last several decades living in Eagle River and, now, Juneau, Alaska, I cannot count the number of loved ones that have bravely shared with me their traumatic childhood experiences with sexual violence and abuse. Their experiences, told so many years after the violence occurred, highlight the power and control and manipulation tactics that perpetrators use to groom and isolate victims.

Throughout this state, there is so much shame and blame directed at victims of sexual abuse and violence. People feel deeply uncomfortable discussing this subject and it's treated like a Pandora's Box: the moment people address Alaska's horrific rates of violence, they have to recognize how endemic this issue is and how the perpetrators are our neighbors, our friends, and our family members. It's a deeply uncomfortable realization that quite a few people would prefer to avoid. But it is a deeply important conversation that needs to be occurring throughout the entire state and within our schools.

The question is not whether or not violence is preventable. The question is how do we best prevent it. H.B. 233 provides a succinct, comprehensive approach to a very real challenge by recognizing that our legislature has a role in promoting violence prevention and our school system has a role in educating students, parents, and staff about this very serious subject.

As the Chair of the Committee on Education, you play a powerful and unique role in addressing the needs of Alaska's children and youth through meaningful, thoughtful legislation. Please seize this opportunity and employ empathy as you listen to testimony tomorrow morning.

Sincerely,
Esther Smith

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HB 233

Christine Gerlock [cmgerlock@hotmail.com]

To: [Rep. Lynn Gattis](#)

Cc: [Rep. Geran Tarr](#)

Thursday, March 27, 2014 7:42 PM

- You replied on 3/27/2014 10:34 PM.

Rep. Gattis,

Please consider supporting House Bill 233, Erin's Law which will provide age appropriate sexual abuse education to children in public schools. This is an important step in empowering children to recognize and report child sexual abuse. Since Alaska has a high rate child sexual abuse, this is an amazing opportunity to change the lives of Alaskan children and their families.

Thank you for your consideration,
Christine M. Gerlock