

Testimony of Ronald Wicke in Support of SB 1033, An Act Concerning the Limitation of Time to Bring a Civil Action for Damages Caused by Sexual Abuse, Sexual Exploitation or Sexual Assault Suffered by a Person Prior to Attaining the Age of Majority

Judiciary Committee Public Hearing, April 4, 2011

Senator Coleman, Representative Fox and members of the judiciary committee, my name is Ronald Wicke and I am testifying today in support of bill SB1033.

I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse and I know how long it took me to recover enough to overcome my shame and be able to talk about my abuse.

Like most children I was abused by someone I knew, a close family friend, I was 11 years old. I first spoke out about my abuse at the age of 25, but nobody listened to me, it took another 27 years to be heard. In between I followed a path well worn by many other abuse survivors.

Filled with self hate and anger, I acted out with drugs and alcohol. I put myself in very dangerous and violent environments, rebelling against both society and myself. I was conflicted and confused. Always alone, even in a crowded room. My life was filled with shame, guilt and anger.

At 25 I sought help for my addiction, life started to change for the better. I have always felt different, a void in my soul, something that is hard to put into words. Every thought and decision in my life has been affected by the impact of abuse. It forever changed me. And yet at that time nobody discussed abuse, there were no books or scientific papers, and there was then no recourse to justice, my statute of limitations had already passed.

At 25 I told my AA sponsor I had been abused. His reaction was to attempt to abuse me again. The law didn't respect the abused and nor did society. My abuse sunk back into my soul and it was another 27 years before I had the courage to go to The Center for Sexual Assault and Abuse in Stamford, Connecticut. For the first time someone believed me.

Helped by media coverage, society is changing slowly. I recently appeared as one of 200 men on The Oprah Show. For many of us it was the first time we had spoken publicly about our abuse. Recently a member of the group asked how long it took for each of us to reach out and be heard after the abuse ended. The average was 41 years! I no longer feel alone.

Being abused as a boy is surely no worse than being abused as a girl except that it took me over 20 years of trying to talk about my abuse to family, to therapists, alcohol treatment centers and doctors. The reaction was horribly consistent; why did I allow it to happen, boys can't be abused, get over it, it happened a long time ago. Both abuse centers said that if it happened at all, I should get over it as I was a male.

Society is beginning to listen, now we need to change the law to allow childhood sexual abuse survivors like myself the justice we have always been denied. Here in Connecticut we have a choice, protect our children or continue to protect their abusers with statutes of limitations that are arbitrary in nature. They don't apply to murder and yet like many survivors on occasions my shame has driven me to consider ending my own life. My abuser murdered my soul.

A quarter of Connecticut's children are sexually abused before their 18th birthday. Childhood sexual abuse is recognized by the CDC as a chronic problem. It's a problem that carries a taxpayer burden for America of \$400 Billion a year.

I now work to stop abuse as a board member of the Stop Abuse Campaign. I volunteer at The Center in Stamford and run survivor support groups with them. With the Stop Abuse Campaign I am establishing a national network of survivor support groups. I do what I can to stop abuse and alleviate the suffering of the many involved.

Today I'm here to ask you to do the same, because working together we can stop abuse. Please pass bill SB1033.

Ronald Wicke