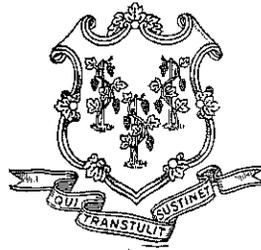


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**State of Connecticut**  
**SENATE**

*Chair*  
Labor & Public Employees Committee  
*Vice Chair*  
Planning & Development Committee  
*Member*  
Public Safety & Security Committee  
Veterans' Affairs

February 27, 2014

Good afternoon, Chairs, Ranking Members, and the members of the Committee on Children.

I am Senator Cathy Osten and I am here to voice my support for SB 203, otherwise known as Erin's Law. This bill would develop an age-appropriate state-wide sexual assault curriculum for public schools to present to their students.

Many people have asked why, with all of the things we are required to teach children, we should add one more thing to the pile. I say why not?

I could tell you about the young women I met while working for the Department of Correction. Sixty-seven percent of all female inmates are abused pre-adolescence. One young woman I knew would relive her 10<sup>th</sup> birthday 'gift' of familial rape by jumping off of stairs or fire escapes. She escaped then by jumping out of a second-story window, breaking both legs. This young woman still bears the scars from that, emotional and physical.

I could also tell you about my own family member, the reason I have worked so hard with Erin's law, who was abused and was not able to say so for over a year.

Even more, I could tell you that children have more to fear from inside the home than from strangers as ninety percent of sexual assaults are perpetrated by family, friends, or neighbors.

I met Erin Merryn at the Glamour Magazine Awards and heard of her campaign to bring Sexual Abuse Prevention and awareness to all 50 states, and even possibly beyond. I asked her for information about this initiative, and after reading it, am honored to introduce this legislation here in Connecticut. As Erin herself has stated, 9 states have passed this legislation, and it is pending in over 25 more.

Returning to the question of why here, and why now, it is simply right. Also, if not now, then when? The socio-economic implications of the damaged adults our inaction leaves us with increases each year.

I want to leave with the story of Charmaine, a twenty-year-old young lady I met while working with the Department of Correction. I was conducting a program, similar to Scared Straight, but without much of the yelling, which brought young offenders together with teens to show the young people the possible consequences of their actions. During the program, Charmaine spoke about her life, the choices she had made, and the sexual abuse she had suffered at the hands of her family members. Later in the week, she came to me and told me that the program had made a huge difference in her life. When she had returned after the last outing for the program, she had made a phone call to her family, telling them to keep her daughter away from her abusive cousin. She revealed to me that she had not known that sexual abuse was neither appropriate nor acceptable, and she did not have to put up with it. Through the program and the education she received, she knew that she did not have to put up with it, and that she could help protect her daughter from experiencing the same abuse by keeping her away from the abuser.

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I ask you today to please pass this bill, educate our children about abuse, and protect them from these horrible acts. Thank you.