

Testimony 203

Good evening members of the Committee of Children. Thank you for the opportunity to speak on behalf of S.B. 203. My name is Steven Loschiavo and I am currently a senior at Southern Connecticut State University in New Haven. I am currently in the Social Work undergraduate program at the university. I am currently the social work intern at West Haven Child Development Center. I work with children between the ages of six months to five years. I am writing this testimony in support of S.B. 203.

According to the Child Welfare League of America (2014), "In 2010, Connecticut had 45,313 total referrals for child abuse and neglect. Of those, 25,777 reports were referred for investigation" (p. 1). The number of referrals that turned into investigations is significantly high considering that the number is over half of the total referrals for that year. Of those "25, 777" reports that were recommended for investigation, "10,846 children were victims of abuse or neglect in Connecticut, a rate of 13.4 per 1,000 children, representing a 11.2% increase from 2009. Of these children, 99.0% were neglected, 6.1% were physically abused, and 4.5% were sexually abused" (The Child Welfare League of America, 2014, p. 1). After reviewing the data, these percentages were quite concerning. These incidents of sexual abuse against a child are increasing over the years and are seemingly on the rise.

As I stated before, I am currently an intern at the West Haven Child Development Center. I work with children every single day. There are about 160 children that attend the center. They are between the ages of six months to five years. After my first month or so there I would have never thought that these children would have been sexually abused. As time went on, I really started to get to know these children, conduct observations on their classroom behavior, and establish a rapport with them. I began to review some of their case files and I came across some information unbeknownst to me. Out of the 160 or so children that attend the center, I have come to find out 4 of them have been sexually abused in the recent past. The children are carefree and happy during the day. One would never in the slightest think that a child so young and innocent could be victim to such an atrocity. By providing an awareness program across the entire state, the amount of referrals would decline and families would be aware of the risks that their children are in. Grant these children the opportunity to live carefree and happy lives instead of being traumatized victims of sexual abuse that will stay with them for the rest of their lives.

Those opposed to the bill will say that these programs instituted across the state will cost billions and billions of dollars. Those opposed will also say that all Connecticut residents will pay the price in state taxes. Anything in life costs money and if it benefits the livelihood of children, then why oppose it? Why should the children have to pay the price with their lives because nothing was done about it? It is time to advocate! What those opposed need to remember is that these children are our future. They will continue to carry on long after we are gone. We are the catalysts for giving them that opportunity and we need to take the time to prevent such disturbing actions from occurring against them. This is why I, Steven Loschiavo, support S.B. 203. I would ask that the Committee of Children vote favorably in seeing this bill become law. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak and having my voice heard.

Thank you,
Steven Loschiavo

Reference

Child Welfare League of America. (2014). *Connecticut's Children 2012*. Retrieved from <http://www.cwla.org/advocacy/statefactsheets/2012/connecticut.pdf>