

Melissa Sweet

From: Dewan Thornberry <dewanthornberry@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, May 5, 2020 10:51 AM
To: Melissa Sweet
Subject: HB 5679 written testimony

My Name is Dewan Thornberry. I am a Tier 3 offender with a committed date of like '94 and convicted 2003.

My story is perhaps a little different because my offense was brought to light when I sought counseling for my Family and I....especially my Step Daughter who was my victim.

I was trying to get clean and sober and wanted to die because I had so much guilt and shame because Courtney was not taken seriously when she told adults in early '94 what I had done to her and I, of course, frantically denied it.

I told the counselor in 2003 and he told the police.

Don't get me wrong, I didn't anticipate the police being involved but I just couldn't live with myself because of what I'd done and because when she tried to tell, to get help...she got none.

I saw it at the time as I had to do whatever I could and if I were to live that she was owed the recognition, the help- the protection that she sought and I had denied her because I was afraid of what would happen to me. She had to become more important than me.

At the time her and her Mother were of course, angry that I did what I did but also that I even brought it back up.

I admitted it and gladly accepted a sentence of 1 year probation and lifetime registration as a sex offender. Nobody told me that since I had committed this crime before the SORA existed that this did not have to be an option.

I guess at the time I was glad to get it behind us and to not be going to jail. I think I felt like they were going kind of easy on me because of the circumstances and Courtney and her Mom didn't want to be in court- at all.

The registry has gotten a whole lot harder since then.

I asked my wife at the time for a divorce almost a year later because I needed all drugs out of my life-even marijuana which was a big part of our lives and always led me back to harder and worse things.

I fell in love later with my 13 year old Daughters friend's Mother who had 4 kids (Becca 7, Sarah 9, Brit 13 and Ryan 15). This made for a giant custody battle, the TV news being involved at the hearing and ultimately helping to raise my 4 Step children along with my 2. Eight of us under one roof!

I'm sure you can imagine the difficulty the sex offender registry caused with custody, schools, kids friends finding out, neighbors....etc, etc... All my Kids had their first car listed on the Sex Offender registry.

Kids are all gone from home now. I am absolutely confident of what kind of person my Step Kids and Kids would say I am.

I believe if there were a way to earn yourself off of the SOR it would be more beneficial to everyone. When I first heard about the Does case and mistakenly thought I might get off- I wept out of gratitude and relief. I missed adding a new vehicle once. I missed a re-register by a couple days once. It made me so fearful I wanted to lie and hide out. It turned out okay.

I guess overall the sex offender registry has affected those close to me or have loved me more than it really affected me except for making life difficult but I did do a very bad thing. I have made it my life's work though to be a better person and to not only not harm someone in the same way ever again but to always try and make reparations to those I have harmed and also society as a whole.

I'd like to help but I'm not a very organised person and am usually busy running two businesses that barely make it (can't really get a decent job can I?).

I will try and do what is needed of me though.

Now that I have 3 Grandchildren I believe I could be a better grandfather and even give my Grandkids more and be there for them more if I were not on the SOR. My daughter would like me to pick 2 of my Grand babies up from daycare but is afraid they may find out. Isn't it illegal too? I don't think it was originally. Eventually I was barred from picking up my Step daughters from Junior High much to their embarrassment.

Again, it mainly affects them (although this does sadden me because I want to be Super Grandpa so they will always know that "Grandpa sure did love us because he was always there") Time is our greatest gift and "being there" has the biggest impact I think. Just ask my Kids.

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Thank you,

Dewan Thornberry
and Co-signed by my Wife Susan
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