

4/14/21

Lindsay Dunlop

Regarding HB 798, 4994

Thankyou for having me here today. It is an honor to speak before this committee, AGAIN in regards to address confidentiality for victims of domestic violence and sexual assault. I am not going to share my entire personal story on why these bills are needed, because you have already heard my harrowing tale of my near death experience as a survivor of domestic violence and stalking.

Now, I have no training on our legislative process and am surprised that I am here again... but I'll be here until I'm no longer needed in support of this topic because just that... I am here alive and well and able to fight. I am here on behalf of those who are currently in the same shoes I once was... Wanting to bring my abuser to justice so that he doesn't hurt anyone else, including myself... but also afraid of not having protections in place to make it possible for me to do this safely. I remember crying in the parking lot of the police station and begging to get a restraining order and being told "mam, we cant help you unless you help yourself. You need to file a harassmt charge against him for us to be able to help you with that." And me crying and declaring "but he already wants to kill me and I didn't even do anything wrong to upset him. If I do this before I get protection, he WILL kill me. He told me he will never go to jail. He told me that if he has a domestic violence charge they will take his guns and he promised me that the only way anyone will take his guns is after they pry him out of his cold dead hands and that if he dies, I have to go first."

I was denied any and all protections... numerous times... and as you know, I did not pursue charges. I had to fight or flight and I flew into hiding to save myself. You may remember from that story that he did go on to shoot several women before taking his own life. Domestic violence is not a personal problem, it is a community issue. And we need to get these abusers off of the streets before they turn and not only repeat their inappropriate and dangerous behaviors, but often escalating them with the next victim.

Now I'm being told that these bills were developed to address a recent Court of Appeals decision that requires defense counsel to be provided with everything in a case, including unredacted victim statements. If unredacted statements are given to the defense they could include personal information a victim. The point of the bills that were already passed, were to ensure confidentiality of the victim. If there are any exceptions to the confidentiality... then everything that myself and all of these other survivors have fought for... for years.... Is literally for nothing. I have family and friends that are so proud of me for making a difference and fighting for those who can not fight for themselves and now I'm supposed to turn around and tell them that it was for nothing. That I changed nothing? I thought when we succeeded in getting these bills passed we had made a change.

Survivors of domestic violence are often told to "just leave," in regards to their abusive partner. Statistics show that the most dangerous time for a survivor of abuse is when a victim decides to leave an abusive partner. One study found in interviews with men who have killed their wives that either threats of separation by their partner or actual separations were most preceding events that lead to the murder. Victims reasonings for staying with their abusers are extremely complex and, in most cases, are based on the reality that their abuser will follow through with the threats they have used to keep them trapped: the abuser will hurt or kill them, they will hurt or kill the kids, they will harm or kill pets or others, -- the list goes on.

Stalking victims often struggle to stay safe. They may have to switch jobs, move to other towns or states, live in hotels or even change their names. And yet, stalkers may still find them. Our abusers are manipulative, conniving and determined to punish those who punish them. They WILL find a way to get this information if it is not 100% confidential. The fewer people who know a victim's location, the safer

he or she will be. Using a substitute address or confidentiality program to give to the defense counsel must be done. Until the abuser is behind bars, this is one of the only protections that can decrease the victim's vulnerability to stalkers and other offenders who attempt to locate them.

Thankyou