

TESTIMONY OF

CHIP ST. CLAIR

Regional Director

JUSTICE FOR CHILDREN

for the

MONTANA SENATE JUDICIARY COMMITTEE

HOUSE BILL NO. 643

Revising Sexual Predator Laws

Introduced by J. Sinrud

March 30, 2007

Thank you for the opportunity to address these very important issues. I'd like to convey the importance of this legislation to our community and to our children.

- My story
 - Local / National headlines

- JFC
 - We ID & rescue children falling through the cracks in the system...
 - Voice of the murdered children

- We do a lot of reactive work
 - Working w/victims of abuse / non-offending parents.

- Proactively, I put into place programs to help children in schools who may have faced the same nightmare I did.
 - Damage control

- Let me tell you why this legislation is so important
 - Much more than "Punishment"
 - Much more than "Repercussion"

- It is PREVENTATIVE
Look at these stats:
 - 2/3 of child molesters reported sex abuse as children
 - Each child predator avgs. 117 victims – most NEVER report
 - 76% of serial rapists reported sex abuse as a child
 - 67% of all sexual assaults are committed only against children
 - 95% of teenage prostitutes were sexually abused
 - 1 of every 8 boys & 1 of every girls are sexually abused

- So I look out at these kids and do the math – then I speak
 - I tell them my story and hope to make a difference in those #s
 - Kids come up to me after and reveal the most horrific things, but at least they are talking to someone

- **But that is what this legislation represents: DAMAGE CONTROL**

- These predators **NEED** to stay behind bars for a **MIN** of 25 years
 - *If* not for life and *if* they get out-
- **TRACK** them because we also know that:
 - 60% of child predators are on parole or probation
 - 95% of victims know their perpetrator
 - The recidivism rate is as high as 70%
 - John Newman of Impact Services in Oakland County states that if given enough time, a sex offender **WILL** eventually resort to murdering their victim in an effort to silence them and continue their compulsion. It is **NOT** a matter of **IF**, it is a matter of **WHEN**.

The only way to **PROTECT OUR CHILDREN** and to **CUT SPENDING**

- Because nationally child abuse costs gov't **\$96 billion annually** including costs dealing w/:
 - Foster care
 - Juvenile crimes of victims
 - To help stop the bleeding
- You see, every preventative dollar spent saves the repercussion of child abuse tenfold
- The only way to protect our children and society is to enact this legislation
 - Tough sentencing guidelines
 - GPS tracking for life
 - There is legislation sometimes passed that has no "TEETH"

THIS LEGISLATION IS DIFF. – IT WILL TAKE A HUGE BITE OUT OF THESE ISSUES

- If it does **NOT** pass, it sends a message to child predators: **COME TO MONTANA**
- This a National trend and **we need to be the leaders**
- The time has not only come for this legislation, it is **far too many Jessica Lunsfords overdue -- LET'S PROTECT OUR CHILDREN, AND STOP HAVING TO NAME LAWS AFTER THEM.**



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Children are our most precious resource. That is why Justice for Children, the nationally recognized, award winning 501(c)(3) nonprofit has been dedicated to rescuing abused and neglected children since 1987.

With nearly 3 million children reportedly abused each year, Justice for Children identifies and attempts to rescue children who fall through the cracks in the system, and fights relentlessly to bring child predators to justice.

Did you know?

- In Michigan, a child is abused or neglected every 20 minutes
- Over 1/2 of all child fatalities previously had a case file with Child Protective Services
- Each child predator averages 117 victims - most NEVER report
- Over 90% of the prison population were abused as children

An Effective Solution: Justice For Children

JFC fights for children who are left in an abusive home or are forced to visit their offender. And when we find a child predator who has slipped through the cracks, we work with law enforcement to hunt them down and put them behind bars. In our communities, we have designed programs to educate the public, including our children, about child abuse related topics. The 4 main programs that are a part of JFC everyday are:

Case Intake Program

- Direct Casework
- Court Advocacy
- Therapy Referrals
- Courtwatch
- Helpline
- Law Database
- Track Sex Offenders

Legal Aid Program

- Legal Referrals
- Discretionary Legal Defense Fund
- Court Doc Filing
- Legal Clinics

Community Outreach Program

- Community Seminars
- School Programs
- Community Awareness Events
- JFC Membership Opportunities

Legislative Initiative Program

When the proper laws don't seem to be in place to effectively protect our children and keep predators off the streets, we research new options through case studies, statistical data, and key stakeholder insight to develop a legislative action plan and fight for tougher laws.

Michigan's Children Are One Step Closer To The Childhood They Deserve

The best way to ensure our children's safety is to keep child predators behind bars. That's why Justice For Children fought for and helped to pass Michigan's version of Jessica's Law. This law was inspired by the death of 9 year old Jessica Lunsford who had been kidnapped, raped, and murdered only yards from her Florida home. JFC joined her father-turned-advocate Mark Lunsford, with compelling testimony which allowed the bills to pass nearly unanimously. GPS trackers for life for those who commit 1st or 2nd degree child sexual assault, and 25 year minimums for 1st degree were among the bills passed. Thanks to all who testified, there is now justice for Michigan's children.