

February 28, 2018

HB2739 (Aly-Zay Law)

Proponent Testimony of Sarah Good

Chairman Jennings and honorable members of the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee, I am Sarah Good, Alyssa Runyon's aunt (Zaylynn Paz's great-aunt), and my testimony today is on behalf of several members of Alyssa and Zaylynn's family who are represented here today, including Alyssa's grandparents, uncle, and cousin.

You've heard very personal testimony from Alyssa's father (Zaylynn's grandfather) Ed Runyon, and you've heard testimony from Representative Whitmer who is sponsoring this bill. Alyssa and Zaylynn's story...our family's story...is very specific. The events that occurred around Keith Lane Hawkin's criminal history and incarceration history represent numerous holes and cracks in the system that ultimately led to the violent murder of Alyssa and Zaylynn on August 7th, 2017. I won't repeat those here. There were many failures, the sex offender registration process for juveniles is just one. There is, however, one key fact that I think has been overlooked today. Keith Hawkins committed his violent, sexual crime at the age of 12, was adjudicated at the age of 14, and WAS required to register as a sex offender for life. However, under current regulation, the judge that adjudicated his case had the discretion to make his lifetime registration available only to law enforcement. The change we are asking you to make today is small; lifetime registration is already an option for juveniles, and public registry is as well; we're asking for a change that removes the discretion afforded to judges to limit the public availability of such registration or the limitation of registration time based on the offender being a juvenile.

You have a lot of opposition testimony, both in person and in writing, that argues that not all children should be treated/punished as adults. We whole-heartedly agree with these arguments, and this position is not mutually-exclusive with what we are asking of you today. We are only asking that you re-evaluate how the system treats those juveniles who commit a sexually, violent crime....and only those crimes that, if committed as adults, would require lifetime registration.

Much of the opposition testimony begs the committee to leave the fate of these juveniles in the hands of trained mental health clinicians and give them the opportunity to rehabilitate. This position is perfectly appropriate for trial and defense processes and we would agree. *However, the current, un-amended regulation asks judges (not mental health professionals) to make this determination currently. Voting against HB-2739 does not achieve what the opposition is arguing for.* This change we are seeking today removes the discretion and variation, and requires consistency for conviction of certain sexually violent crimes regardless of offender age; it is not intended to change the way the legal system handles sexually deviant behavior; only sexually violent offenders and therefore still provides much of the same flexibility for the examples articulated in opposition testimony.

We know we are asking for a lot today, even though it seems like a simple revision. The way the law currently is written prioritizes the rights of the offender over the rights of the general public. We are asking you to flip the table, and prioritize the rights of your constituents OVER the rights of the convicted offender by voting to protect their right to be informed and aware (through public registry) and to protect themselves.

There is no way to know if this law would have changed the outcome of this situation; whether public registration of Keith Lane Hawkin's sex-offender history would have saved Alyssa and Zaylynn's life. However, if you approve and pass this bill, you can, in good conscience, know that through the public registration requirements, you have given the general public every opportunity to be aware, informed and protected.

Thank you for your time and consideration!



Alyssa Runyon and Zaylynn Paz

Contact Information:

Sarah Good

Sirsikgood@gmail.com

Ph: 620-290-1630