

Greetings,

My name is Brianna Monroe. I do not know everything about politics and the many laws our great country holds. But I have been learning about how our leaders can make great changes if they hear enough voices and can hear from real people about how that change matters greatly.

I heard about this House Bill 4482 and I am pleased to read about what is in it. I understand that laws and Bills will never really be “one size fits all”. Every crime is a little different and therefore, every reaction for a victim is different as well. I won’t pretend like this Bill will fit for every case. I do think though, that it may help many victims if it is passed. I would like to share a quick example of why “limitations” can impact victims more than most realize.

I was manipulated, sexually abused in an oral fashion (both ways), hand jobs, fingered, and raped by my highschool teacher. He started becoming a father figure to me the first year I met him (I was only 15. I was previously homeschooled and extremely sheltered). He promised a Biblical leadership role, in which I would follow all of his rules and guidance. Our school was small and ran by a Baptist church.

Why is this important? Because he led me to believe everything that happened was either God’s plan or somehow my fault. He also convinced me that if I should ever tell anyone, any aftermath of it, would be my fault. There was guilt coming out of every part of my body. I could tell no one. Until I was an adult. I think I was just about 20 or 21 when I finally told someone. I then told a counselor. Shortly after, I filed a personal protection order. It wasn’t until a while later I made an official police report. It took so long to realize what he had done. And to realize so many physical and emotional symptoms I was having in my life were due to an immense amount of trauma. After filing the police report, a couple weeks later my phone rang. The kind State Trooper said, “I am so sorry, I waited two weeks to tell you the news...” He was so sad to tell me. And in so many words, he explained, he was so sorry, but the prosecutor up in Gaylord wouldn’t even look at my case. It had been 7 years since my rape and my abuser wouldn’t be prosecuted. It was too late for justice.

Yes, this was a criminal matter and not a civil matter in my case. I just want you to know that it mattered to me. Limitations mattered. When the Trooper said those words and some more I don’t have time to repeat. It felt like a crime all over again. The thoughts of somehow, this was “my fault”. Or this happened and I should have been more “brave” to tell someone sooner. Or maybe, it isn’t a big deal and I should have stayed silent. Why did I humiliate myself in telling the police, if they can’t help me?

So many negative thoughts and years of hell followed that moment. It was torture. Then one day, many years later a new prosecutor was in charge and an amazing detective started to investigate. They had found out about my Rape case and my friend’s horrifying stories of sexual abuse (Grace Baptist Christian School in Gaylord, MI). They decided to prosecute. Then a miraculous thing happened. I got to file a criminal complaint and move forward for justice. When someone else told me it was too late for justice, THEY found a way to bring my heart the healing it longed for, for over a decade before. And they helped put a rapist behind bars.

I am trying to make this as short as I can. It is hard to fit a lifetime onto one page. I just need you to know that being shut down for justice felt like my heart was made of glass and it shattered in slow motion onto the floor. But after I finally got to go to court and tell the judge what happened it was one of the biggest changes of my life. The heavy weight was gone. The daily nausea of what he did to me

was finally resolved. It changed many things in my life. I had an unbelievable amount of peace. It matters. We matter. Justice matters. I didn't ever get the chance or maybe I didn't know that I could back in 2019 to get a civil case going for myself. And that would have been awesome. But I at least want other victims to get the chance. Because even a little justice, compensation, or both is better than being ignored or told "It's too late, YOU should have told us sooner" or, "Why tell us now?", or other harmful comments.

Every victim is different. I hope you can see that it takes time for us to process the crime against us. It may take even more time to realize it isn't our fault and that we can do something about it.

Thank you for your time!

With all my heart,

Brianna Monroe

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