

In reference to HB2173

To the members of the committee,

I was contacted and asked to share my story and experience with you. In 2003 my parents were going through a very emotional divorce. Peaceful talks turned to fighting, family members taking sides. My mother was losing the custody battle and eventually accused me of molesting my 13 year old sister, saying she would only pursue charges if my dad continued to fight. At the time I was attending college in a neighboring state and hadn't spent a lot of time at home so my dad asked for some time to figure out if there was any merit to the accusations. My mother refused. That night she called the police and gave a statement. My sister later told our dad she initially refused to talk to the police, but was brought down to the local station to be formally interviewed. The detective told my sister that the charges against me were minor, that I would get a slap on the wrist for sexual assault. However, if the stories that my mom and sister gave didn't match up then someone would end up going to jail for lying to the police, and that she didn't have a choice. She had to make a statement. My sister was a scared child and believed the detective, and so she repeated what our mom had said.

I was eventually arrested and brought back to Kansas. During that process my parents got back together. Once I was back home, my mom and sister went to the county attorney and asked that the charges be dropped. He refused, saying they had already invested too much money into the case. That night my mom pretended to go to work, drove through the night to stay with her parents and never came back. Shortly after, my sister went to the detective and tried to tell him the truth. She was told that if she officially changed her story, he would arrest her for lying to the police. She remained silent. That detective would later be forced to resign due to misconduct.

I eventually took a plea deal, pleading no contest with some jail time, probation, and I had to complete a sex offender evaluation. The evaluation gave me a clear bill of mental health with no treatment recommended. After several months of therapy my sister finally came forward and told our dad everything that had happened, even writing letters to the court asking that the no contact order be lifted. She also asked the court to give me a pardon. I completed my probation with no issues, and was released early for having no violations. I spent the next few years just trying to get through the registration period so that I could get back to a normal life. I was completing my

registration when I was told that the laws had changed; my ten year registration period was now a life sentence. That was one of the darker days of my life. I did try a number of times to clear my name, but that process is incredibly difficult and is expensive. My sister expressed interest in helping , however she passed away.

Living on the registry has been difficult to say the least. Over the years the laws have gotten more complex and invasive, leading to harassment at work. There is the constant stress of making sure I know what the current laws are so I don't get in trouble. The county where I live has very strict times when I can register, which has had an impact on my employment. I can assure you that if I had known this would have been a lifetime sentence I would have fought harder 20 years ago.

I do understand the need for the registry, and I understand that there are people who deserve to be on it for the rest of their lives. I feel however like I got caught up in a modern day witch hunt. It has been incredibly difficult to survive these last several years. I would only ask the committee for hope. Hope that I might be able to have a normal life again, not having to panic trying to remember if it's my month to register. Hope that I can exist just as myself and not as a registered sex offender.

Thank you for your time.

Sincerely and respectfully,
Chris