

## **Testimony Before the State House of Representatives**

**Presented by Christine Antes**

**March 16, 2025**

**Honorable Members of the House of Representatives**

I am grateful for the opportunity to address you today. My name is Christine Antes, and I come before you as a concerned citizen of Kansas, driven by an urgent need to advocate for the safety of our children and the integrity of our communities. I am here to call for the enactment of clear, enforceable legislation—modeled on proven protections in other states—to safeguard our schools from registered sex offenders and shield our most vulnerable population from preventable harm.

This issue became personal for me due to a disturbing incident at my son's elementary school. During a school dance, a registered sex offender was permitted to attend. This individual, while surrounded by children, was observed using their cell phone's camera application, directed toward students on the dance floor. Whether photos or videos were captured remains unknown. Most alarming, no law or policy was violated by their presence or actions. Public records show this person pleaded guilty to distributing or receiving child pornography via the internet. According to a Fox 4 Kansas City report, detectives uncovered "hundreds of pictures and videos of naked girls between 1 and 14 years old, including of a six- to eight-year-old girl being sexually assaulted" ("Blue Valley Parents"). This individual remains on the sex offender registry for the next 17 years. Yet, in Kansas, their presence at a school event was permissible.

Other states have recognized this danger and responded decisively. Arkansas, Missouri, Oklahoma, Iowa, Illinois, Florida, and California have enacted laws prohibiting or restricting registered sex offenders from entering school grounds without explicit approval. These statutes establish unambiguous boundaries, enforce accountability, and prioritize child safety. By contrast, Kansas has no such protections beyond parole conditions, leaving our state exposed and reliant on hope rather than policy to prevent harm. Our children deserve better.

The scope of this issue is sobering. The Kansas Bureau of Investigation reports that 12,139 registered sex offenders reside in our state, many of whom fail to comply with registration requirements. Research underscores the risk of reoffending. A DeLisi study from Iowa State University found that "73.8% of surveyed sex offenders admitted to prior sexual abuse, aligning with a 2016 study's finding of 69%. Notably, 59% of offenders charged with possession or distribution of child pornography—often deemed a 'low-risk' offense—admitted to previous sexual abuse, with one reporting 25 victims" ("DeLisi Study").

Further, research by Seto, Hanson, and Babchishin in *Sexual Abuse: A Journal of Research and Treatment* reveals that child pornography offenders with no known contact offenses reoffend sexually at rates of 2–7% over 2.5 to 6 years, while those with prior contact offenses reach 15% in the same period (Seto et al. 124–145). A study by Eke, Seto, and Williams in *Law and Human Behavior* tracks this risk over time, finding that pure child pornography offenders recidivate sexually at 4.2% within 4.1 years, rising to 10–15% by 15 years, while those with contact histories hit 9.2% in 4.1 years and 20–25% by 15 years (Eke et al. 466–478).

Beyond these numbers, experts note that child sex offenders often rely on manipulation—grooming children with kindness or persuasion (Leclerc et al. 2119), exploiting trust, or deceiving families—to gain access and silence victims (Craven et al. 287). This calculated behavior makes them uniquely dangerous

in settings like schools, where trust is assumed and vulnerabilities abound. These statistics and traits compel us to act preemptively, not reactively, as even 'low-risk' offenders pose a persistent, insidious threat near our children.

I respectfully urge you, honorable representatives, to introduce and pass legislation that:

- Prohibits registered sex offenders from entering school grounds, except in instances where parents or guardians, necessitating access for purposes such as parent-teacher conferences or Individualized Education Program (IEP) meetings, have obtained prior approval subject to clearly defined safety protocols established by the school district;
- Permits sex offenders aged 18-21 requiring educational or support services to seek district approval for access, with defined safety protocols that ensure the protection of fellow classmates;
- Mandates clear, consistent school district policies aligned with state standards;
- Ensures accountability for those who fail to uphold these protections.

How many more incidents must we endure before taking action? How many more children must be placed at risk before we establish firm safeguards? Legislation mirroring other states' proven measures is not radical—it is pragmatic. It reflects a commitment to prevention, clarity, and the fundamental duty to protect our youth.

Our schools must remain places of learning and growth, not vulnerability. I implore you to join the majority of states that have prioritized child safety and community security. Let us act now, before the next headline compels us to regret our inaction.

Thank you for your time and consideration. I stand ready to provide additional information or answer any questions to support this critical effort.

Sincerely,

Christine Antes

#### **Works Cited**

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