

My name is Roberta Jackson and I support Bill HB2192 one hundred percent. I became a domestic violence survivor on January 14th, 2023. My offender was someone that I was in a relationship with and I found out after my assault that he has a very, very long history of hurting women in at least 7 states. Every time he got caught, they essentially gave him probation with a delayed sentence as long as he did what he was supposed to. At the time of my assault he was wanted out of the state of Indiana for the same thing and yet they still offered him probation with a 34 month delayed sentence which is the sentence that someone with no history or conviction would receive. Based off of his history he should've went up a severity level and received way more time and no probation. After he was released from jail here in Kansas he went back to Kentucky and hurt another woman there and almost killed her too in September. I work as a 911 operator and on average in my 6-7 hour shifts there are no less than a half dozen domestic calls at any given time being worked by officers. I took a call from a 14-year old girl whose mother's boyfriend was in their house and pointing a gun at her mother after he had beaten her up and there was a protection order in place. She had locked herself in her room and called 911. I got her calmed down and was working with officers to try to get her out of her window when 7 shots went off. The girl was still in her room and she thought that he had shot her mother. He hadn't. He shot into the wall. We ran him through NCIC while all of this was going on and he had been convicted of domestic violence not once, not twice but three times and this would be his 4th conviction. The system is broken. The fact that my offender or this man are essentially getting just slaps on the wrist and basically given a free pass to continue to hurt and potentially kill women is an insane thing that I cannot wrap my head around.

In 2023, there were 31 homicides in Kansas City, KS. Of those 31 homicides, 13 of those were domestic violence related where a PFA was in place. They were also repeat convicted offenders. We had a female victim that had a PFA against her ex. He went into her house while she was sleeping and killed her. He also was a repeat convicted domestic offender who also was given probation after his convictions.

My hopes for this bill are mandatory sentences after the 1st offense if it is a true domestic act. Sentences longer than 90 days for the 1st offense so maybe it will be at least a little bit of a deterrent to commit the act again. That the "repeat offenses" become where it carries over from state to state instead of just within the State of Kansas. That the 1st DV conviction is a felony instead of a misdemeanor. Also, that they have to register as a violent offender on either misdemeanor or felony domestic related convictions.

I had proposed the idea of a National Domestic Violence Registry like there are for sex offenders, violent offenders and drug offenders which should be a stipulation post conviction that they register. This would at least give potential victims a resource to go to before they got involved with someone and give them the option whether they wanted to pursue it or not. One in 3 women and one in 4 men have experienced some form of physical violence by an intimate partner in one form or another. Some of which could be prevented if they were aware that this option was available. This should not be happening at all. I know this bill cannot solve all of the issues around this subject but it is a good start. There is so much more that needs to be done to stop this from happening and becoming more common.

1. The fact that there has to be disfigurement or strangulation to become a felony is ludicrous. There have been women beaten almost to death but it was just bruising and swelling and it was only misdemeanors.

2. Domestic Violence does not only affect the victim. It affects their children....their friends....their families
3. This trauma is not easily moved on from. I am still going to therapy. I struggle every single day to push through and not want to break down. I work 3 jobs just so I don't have to think or feel or cry or scream because it is so hard. I have good days and bad days. I still have nerve damage on my scalp just above where I had my stitches. My migraines have become more frequent after my incident and some days are so debilitating that I can't even get out of bed.

I have since made it my mission to get this changed which is why I contacted Mr. Thompson. Probation DOES NOT work in most cases. They develop a "God Complex" because they believe that they can just keep hurting people because the judicial system just keeps letting them off. The system failed me. They failed his most recent victim. The broken system is the reason that so many victims either don't report it or they end up beaten again or killed before they can. Something has got to change.

I want to leave you with this.....

Seven

The average number of times a woman goes back to the man that abused her

Seven

The average number of times a woman returns to hell because instead of trying to understand her, she is condemned for escaping because instead of asking questions we ask her to stay silent in the name of keeping the peace

Seven times she has to learn that people don't take sides

That speaking out against his lies won't open people's eyes

And the number of times she learns to dismiss her experience because the rest of the world isn't brave enough to see it

Seven times there's a chance she doesn't get to try again

Seven times she goes back to the place she should be praised for leaving

And seven times she has to fight for support when she's fighting just to stand

Seven times we teach her to return instead of teaching ourselves how to save her

Seven times we teach abusers that their actions don't have consequences because seven times we'd rather side with them than admit that the reason a woman returns to the man she should see as a threat is because instead of stepping in to protect her we try to stay out of it

Instead of understanding the battle she fought to walk out that door we tell her the war wasn't real seven times

The average number of times a woman goes back to the man that abused her because we don't yet understand that by not picking sides we pick his. I will not be silent until these men no longer benefit from the ways we fail these women seven times.

I used to think the same way about domestic violence victims about why don't they just leave or that will never happen to me.....until it did and I became one of them. If this can happen to me, it can happen to anyone. Your mothers....your sisters.....your daughters.....and even your sons. So, I, as a domestic violence survivor plead to you to consider this bill. Not only consider it but build on it so that it is taken as seriously as sexual assaults, abuse against children and murder. Victims need to know that there is hope for justice for them.