

## **HB2536.Flannery Houston.2-8-22.Pro**

### **Flannery Houston**

In 2015, I was sexually assaulted by a man I was dating. As I tried to wrap my head around my trauma, I experienced a plethora of conflicting emotions, and though contacting the authorities occurred to me, justice ultimately seemed untenable. I wanted to enlist the prosecutorial support of the justice system, but was silenced by how few basic protections exist for someone like me. I was deeply aware that my case rendered itself as she-said-he-said, and I couldn't imagine pursuing a long road of interrogation and accusation.

On top of everything, I felt shame and guilt for not coming forward. My assailant was free to attack another as I abandoned other potential casualties instead of doing whatever I could to halt future victimization. But I simply could not fathom how legal action would make any difference.

After some time and a lot of healing, I turned my focus towards what I could do to make a difference-ensuring other survivors have their civil rights protected. As a survivor, I deeply understand that we all deserve the same rights no matter where the crime took place.

After my assault, I had a hard time figuring out what protections I would be afforded. Had I known that I would have had access to an advocate's support, and on hand access to information detailing my rights, I would have felt like the law was on my side. I would have felt protected from further traumatization. But none of this information was readily available to me. Survivors are left to navigate a confusing and opaque law enforcement and judicial system on their own -- while at their most vulnerable. Had these protections been available to me, I would have been more empowered to report my crime. HB 2536 ensures that survivors of sexual assault will have the support of the criminal justice system that I never did. Please pass this bill. Thank you.