

Testimony of Sydney Dollinger
House Bill 1145
Senate Judiciary Committee
March 15, 2023

Madame Chairman Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, Good Morning, I am Sydney Dollinger. I am here today to testify in favor of House Bill 1145.

Wake up, brush your teeth, drink your coffee, go to work. Leave work, eat dinner, go to bed, Life is a cycle. Without these cycles we would have no security and would lack any type of productivity within our day to day to life.

Depression, Anxiety and PTSD. Not a cycle but a list of diagnoses I received on October 19th, 2020. This was 21 days after I was brutally raped. I was left covered in gashes, countless bruises and more blood than you realize the human body can hold.

On September 27th, 2020, the day I was raped, any chance I had at a normal cycle filled life was destroyed. After enduring a rape kit and giving a formal statement to the police, it was time for me to heal and time to regain my life cycle.

What no one tells you is that once you give your statement you will never start to heal, you will never regain a cycle, until the verdict is given and let me tell you why.

There are 651 days between the day I was raped and the day that I tried to kill myself.

In that time frame there are 269 index's on my cases docket. 269 times I relived my attack. 269 times I received a phone call from an investigator or attorney, had to appear in court or a deposition. 269 times I had to relive the worst day of my life.

651 days divided by 269 index's is roughly two and a half. Every two and a half days the cycle I started to build for myself was demolished. How was I as a victim supposed to regain a cycle and heal when every two and a half days, I was forced to relive my attack.

Now let's talk about the quality of that life cycle. Living with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder, which is specifically mentioned in House Bill 1145, is living in a constant state of fear. It is a constant feeling that someone is out to hurt you. To this day I do not go to public places alone, I do not answer my phone, I rarely sleep without a nightmare, I avoid bright lights and loud noises, and every stranger looks like a rapist. Because of my cycle being interrupted every two and a half days, I was never able to heal. I went through the entire criminal prosecution process with active and severe PTSD.

I can't help but wonder if I had been given a period of time to heal like future women will hopefully have, would my actions on July 10th have happened?

On July 10th, 2022 my mental health had reached a point of no return. The fear of being hurt in my sleep again kept me awake for two weeks straight. The idea that my body was at fault for my attack led to me starving myself. And the persistent feeling that I would be better off dead was the only thought I had.

Because I had to relive my attack so many times, because I was never allowed to heal and because I never received my justice I deserved on July 10th 2022, I tried to take my own life.

I guarantee you I was not the first woman to feel this way but hopefully I can be the last. By giving the next victim time to heal she can seek therapy as soon as she is ready.

The victim can acquire grieving tools and self de-escalation tactics to help regulate her emotions and prevent overstimulation. Overstimulation can cause panic attacks, flashbacks, suicidal ideations or self harm.

Please view this as more than a Bill. You are giving the next victim time to heal, saving them from 269 panic attacks or 269 sets of tears.

This Bill will not have any impact on my case or my cycle. However, if we want to stop sexual violence we need victims to come forward. Often times after a person is raped they feel that they are damaged and will never be whole again.

These feelings combined with fear halts a victim from fighting for justice. House Bill 1145 shows victims that they are not damaged and they will be whole again. It allows them to fight for justice on their timeline, removing the statute of limitations from debilitating them further.

I am here today on behalf of all sexual violence survivors in the state of North Dakota. Please consider a do pass vote today. What you're doing will save lives and inspire change within our state. Thank you for your time, Madame Chairman and members of the committee. I am happy to answer any questions.