

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

Madame Chairman Larson and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am Susan Dollinger. I am here today to testify in favor of HB 1145 as the mother of a rape victim who recently endured trial process of our criminal justice system.

As you know, House Bill 1145 would allow victims of sexual assault the time they need to receive mental health services before prosecution must begin without fear of the statute of limitations running.

On September 27, 2020, approximately six short weeks into her freshman year of college, my daughter went to a party. She drank too much. Her last memory of that night was her friends putting her safely to bed. The next morning when she woke, she found herself in a different room on a couch, bloody, bruised, and in terrible pain.

This experience began her journey with Post Traumatic Stress Disorder(PTSD). To this day, she rarely sleeps because she is terrified of who or what might come get her while she sleeps. On the nights she is able to fall asleep, she has terrible night terrors where she relives the experience. She is afraid to go places by herself and gets severe anxiety in crowds, because she doesn't know if "HE" is there.

My daughter was brave and strong and made the decision to take her case to the police to try and get justice for herself. This process put a considerable amount of stress on her. So much stress in fact that she was unable to continue her soccer career at Minot State University and ultimately moved home where she felt safe in order to finish her degree.

It took over 2-years for her case to reach its conclusion. Just as my daughter would begin to make forward progress in her healing, there would be a delay in the case. Every time there was a delay, it was like she was victimized again. This happened time and time again. This roller coaster compounded the effects of her PTSD to the point she required inpatient therapy.

This Bill will not have any impact on my daughter's case. I hope no one else ever has to go through what my daughter endured but I think we all know this is not realistic. If passed, this bill would allow future victims time to heal from the trauma of sexual assault before being subjected to the criminal process. Victims would be able to develop the skills necessary to cope and live in our scary world after surviving such trauma before maneuvering through the complex judicial process.

If victims are allowed to heal before having to go to trial, my hope would be that more victims would come forward, and that our system could deliver justice for every victim of sexual assault. Please consider a do pass vote and make these tools available to our daughters, sisters, grand-daughters and all victims of sexual assault.

Thank you for your time, Madam Chairman and members of the committee. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.