

# MOCSA

Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault

Testimony from MOCSA's President & CEO Julie Donelon, MSW

**IN SUPPORT OF SENATE BILL 317:** Permitting a prosecution for childhood sexual abuse to be commenced at any time, extending the time to file civil actions for recovery of damages caused by childhood sexual abuse and providing exceptions in the Kansas tort claims act for claims arising from such abuse.

**Senate Committee on Judiciary**

**March 22, 2023**

Good afternoon, Chairman Warren, Vice Chair Wilborn and committee members- I thank you for the opportunity to provide testimony to you today about SB 317.

My name is Julie Donelon, and I am the President and CEO of MOCSA, the Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault. I have worked in the field of sexual abuse and assault for over 25 years working for the Children's Division, a child advocacy center and now rape crisis center.

I am offering this testimony in support of Senate Bill 317.

MOCSA is an independent rape crisis center in Kansas City. Our mission is to improve the lives of those impacted by sexual abuse and assault and to prevent sexual violence in our community – the bi-state Kansas City metropolitan area. In Kansas, MOCSA's service area includes Johnson and Wyandotte Counties.

MOCSA provides personal and criminal justice advocacy and supportive services to victims of sexual violence, we also provide education and prevention programming in schools and within the community, as well as counseling services to victims and their loved ones to help them heal from the crimes committed against them. Last year alone, MOCSA provided counseling services to over 1,500 individuals- ranging from child victims of sexual abuse to adolescent and adult victims of rape and adult survivors of childhood sexual abuse.

Far too many children are victims of the crime of child sexual abuse. Statistics place the numbers at approximately 1 in 5 girls and 1 in 6 boys will be the victim of child sexual abuse before they are 18 years old.

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This crime committed against them, and their experiences will never be disconnected from the rest of their life. The impact of child sexual abuse varies depending on the individual and these impacts can be life altering.

- Child survivors of sexual abuse are at increased risk for anxiety, inappropriate sexual behavior and preoccupations, anger, guilt, shame, depression, posttraumatic stress disorder (PTSD), and other emotional and behavioral problems throughout their life span.
- Research shows that survivors of child sexual abuse are more likely to experience social and health problems in adulthood, such as alcohol problems, use of drugs, suicide attempts, marriage/family problems and poor academic achievement.
- As well as increased risk factors for negative health outcomes, including adult diseases such as heart, lung, and liver disease, and cancer.

Many survivors of this crime delay disclosing their abuse for days, months, years- and some-never disclose their abuse. The reason why victims do not disclose are multifaceted and personal. Victims of CSA experience guilt and shame. They blame themselves for the abuse. They are confused, feel isolated and alone, frightened that if they tell no one will believe them or they will be blamed. For others, their memories of the abuse may have been impaired by the trauma. Or they may have told at one point, but they were not believed or supported.

Child sexual abuse also has long-term financial costs to survivors and our communities. In a 2018 study published in the Child Abuse and Neglect Journal, the estimated average lifetime cost per victim of nonfatal child- maltreatment was \$210,012 in 2010. This includes:

- childhood health care costs
- child welfare costs
- adult medical costs
- loss in productivity
- criminal justice costs
- special education costs.

Insurance does not cover many of these costs like mental health treatment, lost wages due to health care visits, treatments, and procedures. And, ultimately, the burden of these costs is carried by the victim and our state.



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By placing time limits on a survivor's ability to seek a civil remedy for their abuse, we are placing the burden back on the survivor while allowing the perpetrator to move forward with never having to take accountability.

At MOCSA we hear from survivors of CSA that while they may recall what happened to them, they continue to struggle with the abuse inflicted upon them. They are ashamed and still feel unsafe coming forward. They are often protecting their family or the institution where the abuse occurred. They continue to carry with them the need to protect others from what happened to them. The perpetrator may still have a position of power or control over them, they may be a family member and they are concerned about impact of their disclosure on the perpetrator's family members. They risk alienation.

By extending the statute of limitations, SB 317 will increase access to justice for survivors of child sexual abuse. This change will provide greater opportunity for survivors to recover compensation from their perpetrator for the long-term impact of the crime they committed against the victim. Compensation that they can use to help survivors heal from the abuse and move forward.

Additionally, it will provide a legal process for a survivor's voice to be heard. Many will never be able to receive justice in the criminal justice system. This will allow the injustice inflicted upon them to be acknowledged, and the perpetrator to be held accountable for their crime.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sincerely,

Julie Donelon  
President and CEO  
Metropolitan Organization to Counter Sexual Assault