

House Bill 2306
Judiciary Committee
Rep. Fred Patton, Chair

Oral Testimony in support of HB 2306

Members of House Judiciary Committee:

My name is Joe Cheray and I am a survivor of childhood sexual abuse. My grandfather who we lived with was my abuser for 5 years. The sexual abuse started when I was 10 and lasted until I was 15. In addition to being sexually abused by him I was also physically and emotionally abused. I was finally able to break free from the abuse at the age of 15. This was in 1987.

The sexual abuse ranged from fondling inside my shirt, fondling and penetrating my vagina with his fingers, him performing oral sex on me, rubbing himself on my backside when he thought no one was looking, watching me take showers and baths. He attempted to have sex with me when I was 12. By whatever is holy and unholy something stopped that from happening. Had he succeeded I don't know what would have happened to either one of us. I would have killed myself had I become pregnant with his child.

I had finally had enough when I found out my brothers were going into my room and taking things they weren't supposed to. I was carrying laundry out to hand it up on the clothesline and I made the comment that I didn't want anyone going into my room anymore. My grandfather said he could go into my room anytime he wanted to, to which I replied back that I didn't want anyone going into my room. That's when all hell broke loose. No sooner had I managed to get outside he blew up. He went into my room while I was hanging clothes up outside and ransacked it. My bed was torn up, my dresser drawers were pulled out and dumped out, my curtains were torn off the wall, my closet was ransacked. It was a total mess which I had to go in and clean up after he settled down for the day. He came outside and told me he could do whatever he wanted to me and called me a whore, bitch and slut. I was so scared I thought he was going to kill me that day. Later after dinner and he was napping, I lied to my grandma and told her I was going to bike the back roads for a bit and be back. I went into the kitchen before I left and hid a paring knife in my pants pocket. I biked 6 miles to my high school counselors house and I threatened to either kill myself in front of her and her husband or kill her and her husband and risk going to juvenile detention or prison. Either way I was not going back into that house that day. She finally agreed to help me. She claimed she was worried about aiding and abetting a runaway.

At the age of 15 I was essentially cut off from my family after this. I spent time in and out of foster homes and lived with my “mom” here in Topeka. I managed to graduate high school in 1990 even though I was 3 months pregnant.

After reading this bill I would still lose out on suing the estate for damages. My abuser received no slap on the wrist, no probation, and was not arrested for anything. He was a prominent member of the community and president of the altar guild as well as a booster for the school among other things and had money. Currently the only thing that is left from the estate is a \$50K CD which our “mom” is the beneficiary of and she doesn’t know that she has that as the estate which is my older brother and my younger brother decided to not tell her due to complicated family dynamics that is a whole other matter.

I have PTSD, suffer from depression and have a thyroid condition called hypothyroidism. I can’t get therapy because I can’t afford even the minimal co-payment that you still have to pay to go to counseling. I am on Medicaid even. I still can’t have oral sex performed on me without having flashbacks.

I strongly believe and suggest that there be no cap on civil cases relating to childhood sexual abuse and sexual abuse in general. No survivor should have to be turned away to have both criminal and civil justice against their abuser. I plan on suing the church that stood by and did nothing and am part of the KBI investigation into the Catholic church on childhood sexual abuse and I am also helping in the fight to make sure Sheldon’s Law becomes law in Kansas. Sheldon’s Law makes it so that church staff and ministers are legally required to report sexual abuse in their church. Currently that is not the case in Kansas.

Please reconsider the cap on this. It is too important not to let anyone fall through the cracks.

Thank you for your time and letting me speak before you today.

Joe Cheray
A Survivor of childhood sexual abuse