

March 7, 2022

House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee

Kansas State Capitol

300 SW 10th Street

Topeka, KS 66612

Subject: SB 385 – Requiring Registration as a Sex Offender for Certain Violations of the Crime of Breach of Privacy

Dear House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee members,

As the mother of an 18-year-old daughter currently involved in, what will be, a high-profile sex crime and breach of privacy case and a constituent of the State of Kansas, I am writing in support of SB 385, a bill that would require registration as a Sex Offender for certain Violations of the Crime of Breach of Privacy.

I consider myself quite well versed in how to protect my children against inappropriate internet usage, keeping watch over cell phones and social media usage and thought I had all the current issues at the forefront of my parenting as my daughter entered her high school career four years ago. While I am by no means a parent who thinks they know everything on how to keep their children safe, I never in a million years thought I would be walking my daughter into the Shawnee Police Department for an interview with a Detective and to identify herself in a breach of privacy case. What a horrible and gut-wrenching experience both my daughter and I had to go through in the fall of 2021.

Let's take a step back to October 6, 2021, when my kids and I had just finished dinner and were settling in for the night with homework an email from my daughter's school popped up on my phone. I had no idea that opening that one email would change the trajectory of my daughter's senior year in high school as well as our lives. The email notified us that my daughter's beloved choir director had been arrested on two counts of sexual exploitation of a child, and two counts of breach of privacy. The sinking feeling that came over me as my daughter cried at the news that one of her favorite teachers, of which she had just asked to write a college recommendation letter for her, had just been arrested on such awful crimes. On this dark night of October 6, 2021, we had no idea that my daughter would be a victim in this case. Approximately a month after his arrest, I received a phone call from a Detective with the Shawnee Police Department informing me that they had found video footage of my daughter being secretly video'd while undressing at school and requesting that I bring her to the police station so she can identify herself and go through an interview process.

Let's fast forward to March 4, 2022, when I had to take my daughter to the District Attorney's Office in Johnson County, Kansas to meet our attorney, DA Ryan W Walkiewicz, and many other students and parents as he addressed us in his 7th and final parent/student meeting regarding this case. We were

given updates to the case, what to expect going forward, who we should call if we had questions and what the preliminary hearing will look like. The total count of victims in this case supersedes any case involving children and sex crimes/breach of privacy that Johnson County has ever had, hence why it will become a very high-profile case sooner rather than later. Every victim in this case was videotaped without their knowledge while dressing and undressing at school in a room they were led to believe was private from 2017 through September 16, 2021, by their beloved Choir Director. As the mother of a victim the range of emotions spans the gamut from pure hate to helplessness and everything in between. There is nothing that will bring my child's innocence back. There is nothing that will make her trust her teachers or other adults again. She is having to go through weekly counseling with MOCSA to process what has happened. I am left with the questions, "how could this happen?" "who in the world thinks this is acceptable and okay to do to children?" I find myself questioning my parenting and "did I miss something, could I have prevented this, is there something I overlooked that would have led me to know something wasn't right?"

We have a long road ahead of us in the case my daughter is involved in. I am confident you will see this case on the news in the days and weeks ahead. When you hear about it on the news, I ask that you stop and remember this letter and say a little prayer for all the victims and their families. This has changed the lives of MANY young girls and their families. The girls will never get back what he took from them, but you can help give them some added comfort that justice will prevail by voting in favor of SB 385.

Thank you for your time and support, it means the world to all of us!

Best regards,

Heather Townsend

Mother of JT – Senior in High School