

Testimony of Andrew Parish, a Current R.S.O. in the State of Kansas

10/24/2021

To:

The Chair of the Joint Committee on Corrections and Juvenile Justice Oversight, Mr. J. Jennings, to the Vice Chair, Ms. M. Baumgardner, to the ranking member, Mr. D. Highberger, and to the members of the House and Senate who sit in this committee.

My name is Andrew Parish. I am 35 years old and have been a resident of the state of Kansas for most of my life. In 2007, I was convicted via plea bargain of attempted indecent liberties with a child, as well as attempted solicitation of a child. At the time of my arrest I was 17 years old and 20 years old at the time I was convicted. My sentence was to serve on 3 years of supervised probation, the completion of a sex offender treatment program at Prairieview Health in Newton, KS, and to register on the Ks Sex Offender Registration for the next 10 years, and be removed in January of 2017. I would like to note that the court determined that I am not a sexual predator, and therefore I was spared of spending any time incarcerated. I was thankful for the opportunity to avoid jail time, and I was determined to make the most of my time spent at Prairieview, learning all I could and sure I would emerge from the program as different person with a new outlook on life. For the next several years I spent 6 evenings a month in Newton attending the Treatment Program and working as an installation technician for Heating and Air Conditioning duct systems. During those years I was married and saw the birth of my first child, a boy that my wife and I named Judah. Life was very difficult in these years because of the high costs of the Treatment Program, as well as the housing market crash of 2008, which left me unemployed and looking for work and doing odd jobs. My conviction made finding steady work very difficult. My wife and I remained positive, looking forward to the release of supervised probation and, ultimately, the removal from the Sex Offender Registry in 2017. We knew opportunities would increase at that time, and we looked forward to the freedom in would allow in many areas of our lives.

In 2010, I saw the birth of my second son, Caleb, as well as the completion of the Sex Offender Treatment Program, and the release from supervised probation. However, in 2011, the state of Ks passed new requirements for the Sex Offender Registry, which retroactively altered my sentence to a lifetime enrollment. The years that followed were tremendously difficult for my family. We suffered long periods of unemployment, financial strain and closed doors wherever we looked. The hope that I had that life would begin to ease after being removed from the registry was gone, and every avenue looked hopeless. I can honestly say that it is only the grace of God that has sustained me.

I have gone to countless job interviews for work to which I was over-qualified, only to be told that they won't hire felons or sex offenders. I have been denied entry on airlines being told that my destination would not let me enter. I have been unable to coach my son's sports teams, or take them trick or treating. I am not able to vote or serve on jury duty, which are duties I believe all men should fulfill. I have had to live in fear that neighbors would discriminate against me for moving into their neighborhood, or community members would use my registry presence as a reason to flag my house or draw negative attention to my family.

While some may think that rehabilitation and the Sex Offender Registry are not linked, I disagree. Had I been able to be removed from the registry in 2017, which were the terms that I and the court agreed to, I can only imagine how my life would have been different. I have maintained a pristine record since my conviction in 2007 and have never had any further convictions or charges. I must confess, I empathize with those who return to crime in order to make money to pay the bills and put food on their table. We

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have created an environment where the possibility of rehabilitation, or lack of it, paves the road to recidivism, hopelessness, and despair.

Today, I am happy to state that I am now the father of 4 boys, aged 6 to 12. This year, my wife and I celebrated 14 years of marriage. I am a leader in my church, and can provide statements of my character from pastors, police officers, lawyers, business owners, and many other walks of life. I owned a business for 7 years and created a handful of jobs in the Wichita community. Currently, I am employed as a business to business salesman for the largest HVAC supplier in the world. I have overcome the odds through persistence, my community and the generosity of my current employers. Rehabilitation is possible, although tremendously difficult. And while I consider myself to be very fortunate and blessed, I still live in fear of how the registry will impact my life and my children's lives. I fear the day when another child, coworker or random acquaintance with finds my name on the registry and uses that information to negatively affect my job or family. It is a burden my wife and I have carried for 14 years.

I end this testimony by thanking you for taking the time to hear out myself, and Rep. Humphries. I implore you to bring reform to a system that has removed the hope of rehabilitation and reintegration away from so many people who have made grave mistakes, but are able to still be a productive member of society.

Sincerely,

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