

To Whom It May Concern

I would like to thank you for the opportunity to speak today. This is a subject very near my heart. My name is Bruce Bayer. I am the Chairperson of Heads Held High a nonprofit Advocacy Organization here in Pennsylvania. I am a member on the newly formed Citizens Review Panel for the Northeast part of PA. I am also a voting member of the POCC – Protect the Children's Committee that meets in the training facility for social workers in Mechanicsburg. Finally I am a parent of seven children and grandfather of four.

In life I am in the big picture a nobody, but today I come to you as a child advocate. In this role I will not be a nobody; I will be a voice for those who cannot speak. I have never been molested in my life. Throughout my life I did not have any information or knowledge on this subject. The only thing that I knew in this life was that there were the poor, middle class and rich people. Democrat or Republican... That is how life was.

Then one day, life jumped up and smacked me in the head. As my wife has already told you or will tell you, I heard about little CJ. Her story drove me crazy. But I felt that she was just one of those that fell through the cracks. This problem could not be wide spread. Then there was a child with cigarette burns. Again, this child fell through the cracks. Then it happened. We already had two strikes on the system and suddenly, two of my sons told a social worker that they had been molested. So we took them through the system. What did we get? Even though their molester did not live anywhere near us, the system removed them from our home and held them incommunicado for 41 days. Strike three. As a baseball fanatic, the system had their three strikes so now they were out.

My wife and I formed Heads Held High and started advocating for children and families. Not long after we started the organization, a newly elected judge was arrested for molesting his daughter at a pop rock concert. I was shocked to say the least. Then I heard that he was going to be sworn in as judge but not listen to any cases while his case was pending. Imagine that... We, the tax payers, got to pay this person \$127,000 a year to do nothing. We found out that the reason he could be sworn in was because molestation was a misdemeanor. We started protesting and we started a

petition drive to make molestation a stricter crime. We followed this crime and disgraced judge around for a year at the end of which he was finally removed from the bench, disbarred as a lawyer, put on Megan's Law list and probation for 10 years.

My wife and I sat around as we were battling the court in our case and screaming about the punishment the judge received. Think about it. Two children sexually molested, no real professional prosecuted the crime and the perpetrator went his own way. Yet in the case of the judge, he got paid for a year and allowed to go his own way. In a way both of these cases are the same. No one went to jail except for the children in their own minds. They would now have to live with what happened to them for the rest of their lives and know the system simply didn't care.

Now the years have gone by and I have been approached by many people and children who have been molested. One day recently, as I was having a meeting with a woman who had a Children and Youth problem and wanted my advise. I was told the man with her was her boyfriend. As the conversation progressed the woman told me that her 14 year old daughter had a baby. She suspected a student from the girl's school was the father. Later in the conversation she said that she found out the true father was her boyfriend. He was 37 years old. At the time of conception, the girl was 13. I looked this man in the eye and asked him point blank whether he was the father. He answered yes. I asked him why he was in the meeting. He said he wanted to know whether I could help him get his other children back from Children and Youth. I informed him that it would be my business to see him put in jail. A few minutes later he left the meeting and my office.

So the system was going to work this time. I was going to see to it. Right after the meeting, my wife and I called Child Line to report what we had learned. Everything went well. We informed the State Troopers from his area what we witnessed and heard. Children and Youth got a hold of us and said they were on it and asked us to testify. We said yes. Then suddenly, I found out he was still walking around the streets two months later. I was mortified. I was told that he thought he had a connection with the young girl. I was also told that there were two other reports from young girls were made on this person throughout the last few years. I wondered if this pedophile was going to pick up another girl and destroy her life.

Granted that the 14 year old still thinks that she is in love with this person but I submit to you that no child of that age truly knows what love or commitment really is. Jerry Lee Lewis thought he could marry his 14 year old cousin. It pretty much ended what was once a promising career.

If a 14 year old came to you and said that she was in love with a 37 year old, what would be your answer? I hope that it would be that I'm voting for House Bill 1625 tightening the laws and protecting young children from ever having to face this despicable act with no protection. Most molestation goes on unreported. That is a fact that is undisputable. There is history, there are statistics that my wife or someone here could come up with and show you. The reason I believe is because of the fear that the victim has of being ridiculed and unprotected. Ladies and gentlemen, think about it. If most molestation go unreported, and how many times do you hear about the ones that are reported. In Monroe County there are at least 3 cases reported on the news. Imagine if most are unreported, 3 times 4 weeks is 12. 12 times 52 weeks is 144 cases alone in One County. In the cases reported to Children and Youth 85% are unfounded does this mean that 85% of the children are lying or that we do not provided educated enough people to make the determination? I believe it is the latter.

I have met the 85% on the streets outside of group homes and mental hospitals. I have heard their stories of what happened to them and how no one cared. I am one person speaking but here in my hand, I have thousands of people's voices asking you and begging you to pass this Bill.

I know 7 years after my boys reported their story it remains the same except in Children and Youth's opinion because of an under qualified case worker who said they spoke to well. This was because I was paying for their private school education - to be above average.

I would invite any one of the members present today to go on a petition signing and see for your selves what the truth is. I remember one elderly gentleman who came up to me and asked for several copies of the petition. I gave them to him and he mailed them all filled out with a note saying thank you for helping people who as children were molested as he was. The cost to the State is so great, but the cost to the people is even

greater. I call it the loss of innocence once it is gone it will never come back. It takes people out of society who could have been productive citizens and made them dependent on mental health programs. I am not naive enough to think that this new Bill will end the problem but it is a great start. If I only hear about 1 case a week. It will reduce the yearly total to 48 in our State. But there will still be the ones that are unreported....

We need to show them that we care and if they came forward they would be heard and helped. There are 50 child deaths a year according to the Annual Child Abuse Report 2008 for our State. Imagine. If you had been a representative for 10 years – 500 children have died. Isn't it time we helped. Isn't it time we passed House Bill 1625 and began to reduce this number? You may wonder what a child death has to do with child molestation. As long as pedophiles are not punished, their crimes increase in violence. This violence and silence leads to child deaths. Most of the child deaths in the Annual report show that they were sexually abused prior to being killed by their known perpetrator.

I would invite you to join me in doing what is right. I have already testified before the Licensure Board to increase the education of caseworkers. I am now standing before you asking for a tougher law. While this won't be the last time you will hear from me or see from me, each time we meet we make children safer. I hope you join me in this fight, but either way I will continue on one way or the other. Thank you for your time.