

**PERSONAL TESTIMONY OF MEL TOWNSEND
TO THE HOUSE CORRECTIONS AND JUVENILE JUSTICE COMMITTEE**

**IN SUPPORT OF HB 2252
REGARDING REMOVAL OF THE STATUTE OF LIMITATIONS FOR RAPE**

Chairman Rubin and Members of the Committee:

My name is Mel Townsend. I would like to thank you for your time today, and for the opportunity you have provided me to voice my thoughts and opinions on HB 2252, which will remove the statute of limitations on rape in Kansas.

- On December 1, 2008 I became the 13th victim of the Manhattan/ Lawrence serial rapist. I was a sophomore at the University of Kansas at the time, as well as a member of the volleyball team there. It was Thanksgiving weekend when I found myself home alone on a Sunday night. Late that night or more so very early the next morning, a man, whom is still unknown, who had stalked me and knew I was home alone, broke into the house, assaulted me, tied my hands behind my back, and proceeded to rape me multiple times before forcing me to shower for five hours.
- That was 4 years ago now, and it was brought to my attention that the statute of limitations is 5 years on rape cases. I now have less than 365 days to get any kind of closure on my case. We are left with a short amount of time available to catch my rapist. It has taken 4 years for the KBI to get us back DNA results that could be possible hits against a DNA database. The FBI still has not sent us back the information we needed or could use in the process of identifying the man who raped me and 12 other girls.
- My understanding of the reasons for a statute of limitations is: first, over time evidence can be corrupted or disappear; second, memories fade; and third, crime scenes are changed. In my personal case, I do not feel that 1 and 3 are applicable because all of the evidence was collected and obtained at the time of the crime. However, the second point that memories fade isn't justifiable. I can tell you from experience that that statement is completely, 100% false. I will not ever, and could not ever forget the events that happened on that night even if I tried to. Every detail still haunts me, and will never be out of my head. You learn to cope with traumatizing situations, not forget them.
- Along with the reasons I just listed, my next concern comes from a quote from the Congressional Research Service, "The purpose of the statute of limitations in a criminal case is to ensure the prompt prosecution of criminal charges and thereby spare the accused of the burden of having to defend against stale charges after memories may have faded or evidence is lost." My interpretation of that statement is that if a perpetrator can avoid prosecution for five years, then they get to go on with their lives without any worry of being held accountable for their unlawful actions. However, I, as a victim, have to live with the repercussions of being raped for my

whole life, knowing that justice can never be served on behalf of myself and the 12 other girls he assaulted and raped.

- Rape and sexual assault is not something that just happens in movies or TV shows, it's a scary reality that happens to 1 in 6 women nationwide. Having a statute of limitations limits the accountability of the rapist, and with the apparent backlog of DNA analysis from the KBI and FBI labs, a 5 year statute of limitations, is absolutely unfair and quite honestly ridiculous, in the sense that my rapist can walk away after 5 years if he isn't prosecuted, but I cannot walk away from being raped.

Thank you for your time, I really do appreciate this opportunity to share the impact that this statute of limitations has on my life and encourage you to support HB 2252. If you have any questions, I would be happy to address those at the appropriate time.