

HB – 2739 – Opponent Testimony of Emily Schmidt, LPC, NCC February 28, 2018

Chairman Jennings and honorable members of the House Corrections and Juvenile Justice Committee I am writing in opposition of HB - 2739 the legislation removing the protection for specific minors from registering as sex offender on the Kanaz sex offenders registry.

I have worked with children impacted by sexual violence, both victims and offenders. It has been my experience that minors who sexually offend have a high likelihood of having been harmed sexually themselves.

I have worked with individuals who have been sexually abused as young children and act out their trauma by violating another child. This change would not only impact the sexually active teen, but younger children as well. I have seen perpetrators as young as second grade.

Previous victims who perpetrate others are best served receiving mental health treatment to overcome their past trauma. To give these individuals a standing as 'registered sex offender' poses risks. A label given to the individual results in a hindrance to overcoming past trauma, making a repeated violation more likely.

Protecting individuals from sexual violence is important. To help our communities stay strong against such crime, it is my opinion that minors who sexually harm others receive mental health treatment, and a chance to overcome their own trauma, not a label that identifies them as the very person we do not want them to grow up to be.

Thank you for your consideration.