

Alyssa Bradford

February 17, 2020

Kansas State House of Representatives  
Judiciary Committee, Room 346-S  
SW 8<sup>th</sup> & SW van Buren  
Topeka, KS 66612

In RE: Statement of Alyssa Bradford in support of House Bill 2675 of the 2020 Session.

Mr. Chairman and ladies and gentlemen of the Committee:

Thank you for hearing this bill today. My name is Alyssa Bradford and I am here to give testimony in favor of House Bill 2675. Today you will hear my personal story and what has led me to appear in front of you today.

From early 2003 to late 2009, my younger sister and I were subjected to physical, mental, & sexual abuse at the hands of our stepfather, Justin Snyder. I was 7 and my sister was 3 when the abuse began. 2003 consisted of: Running laps around the exterior of the house if we fell asleep in the car; performing 90 degree wall sits, while holding out dumbbells, if we looked at him funny; and being pulled out into the middle of the lake and him saying, "Sink or swim," while he laughed and watched me struggle to keep my younger sister's head above the water.

By 2009, we were facing the extreme: Wearing dog shock collars around our necks; having guns held against our heads; my sister--being forced to drink cups of water back to back until she threw up; and myself--being forced to drink small pours of Dr. McGillicuddy's Peppermint Schnapps until he sent me to bed and came to my room later that night.

In 2009 our fathers gained custody and my mother fled his home 6 months later. But nothing would be done about the abuse we endured those 7 years. In December of 2014, I got a call from the Wabaunsee County Sheriff's Department asking me if I knew who Justin Snyder was. When I told them that he was my former stepdad, they said he had been arrested and suspected of child abuse on a minor child residing in his home: his 14-year-old nephew that he was providing foster care to. He asked if I had any personal knowledge about Justin's abuse and when I told him yes, he asked me to come and give a statement.

Justin's criminal case was drawn out for a year and a half and resulted in a plea bargain. During the time his criminal case was pending, I sought a Protection from Abuse Order; I knew that his counsel would be provided with my statement given to the officer that day and I was extremely fearful while he was out on bond. During his pending criminal case, he did not contest my PFA Order being entered for an additional year. At his sentencing, the county attorney asked me and many other past victims to provide a victim impact statement to enlighten the Court on the pattern of abuse that existed for over a decade prior to this child ever residing in the home. Justin

Snyder was convicted of abuse of a child and criminal threat, with the intent to torture, and spent just 22 months in prison.

Just prior to his release, I started doing research on how I could extend my PFA for longer than just an additional year because coming back every 365 days to get another protection order gave me intense anxiety; I would have to face him yet again. I found KSA 603107(e)(2)(B) and sought legal advice from Brenda Bell before I filed my Motion to extend based on the statute. I was given a final hearing date and asked Brenda to help me with my case. Later, Brenda hired me to work as a paralegal for her firm, a job I still hold and love to this day. After a long day of giving testimony at my hearing, the Honorable Judge Erich Campbell granted my PFA and extended it for an additional 5 years. After that hearing, I felt an intense amount of relief. Justin stated in Court that day that a PFA Order was "just a piece of paper", but to me it was everything. It was what helped me get out of my house every single day. It was what subsided my nightmares that left me screaming in my sleep and then vomiting once I woke up. It was what helped me feel "normal". But exactly 14 days later, Justin filed an appeal and Judge Campbell's decision was overturned, proclaiming that the statute was specific enough to state that I had to have been a household member to the minor child, his nephew, whom he was convicted of abusing. Because I wasn't living in the home during that abuse, I was not granted my PFA. I was destroyed. I was let down by the system that asked me to give my statement and to stand up to my perpetrator; to stand up

for this young boy; to tell my story and show this was not a one-time incident, this was a pattern of abuse that no amount of probation could rehabilitate. My victim impact statement led to his sentencing in prison. It led to my intense fear that he would retaliate against me. And it led to me feeling like I was putting my neck on the line to make sure I did the right thing, while simultaneously feeling like I would be protected after the fact. But telling my story in that instance didn't protect me...it hurt me. Because I was even more fearful of Justin Snyder then than I was when I lived with him. This time he had a real reason to hurt me.

I stand before you today as someone who was negatively affected by KSA 60-3107(e)(2)(B). I stand before you today as someone who strongly supports this bill. And I stand before you today as just one of many former child abuse victims, pleading to be heard. You see, child abuse is hardly ever caught and proven with the first victim. Most of the time you can find a long line of previous victims and can see that the abuser just got "sloppy" with their abuse, feeling confident that if they have gotten this far, they will never get caught. And in their mind, it's a "he said, she said" scenario and they think that no one will believe a child over an adult. That's what happened to us. And more than likely what would have happened to his nephew if he wouldn't have made an audio recording of the abuse taking place. It's what happens more often than not.

The passage of this bill protects past victims who come forward to try and do the right thing to make sure another victim receives their justice, all the while knowing they never got theirs. The passage of this bill protects those who get on a witness stand and relive the horrific childhood experiences they've suppressed in their minds. The passage of this bill protects those who put their anxiety aside and face their perpetrator one last time, even though they hoped they would never have to see them again.

Nelson Mandela said, "There can be no keener revelation of a society's soul than in the way in which it treats its children." I hope this creates a movement for former victims to come forward in another's time of need because they feel they will be protected. I hope this is what gives them the strength to bring to light the things they still struggle with on a daily basis. I hope this moment, your vote, is what begins to heal 'us all.

Thank you for your time today.

Sincerely,

**ALYSSA BRADFORD**

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Alyssa Bradford". The signature is written in a cursive style with a large, looping initial 'A' and a long, sweeping tail on the 'd'.