

**Proponent In-Person Testimony SB 317
Senate Committee on Judiciary
March 23, 2023**



Members of the Committee:

My name is Lesa Patterson-Kinsey. I am a survivor of child sexual abuse and my abuser was James Patterson, my father. The person who should have been my greatest protector was the one I needed protection from.

As I turned 9, I was athletic, outgoing, and confident. However, I began to notice my dad making comments about my body. Which I thought of it as a hindrance since I just wanted to climb trees, bike and swim all day. He made comments about all women. I argued w/him all the time about it. This was shift from our earlier relationship where I would hang out with him working on our cars, gardening, & fishing. But now, I was deemed different, I was considered a young woman now. Remember I was 9.

My dad began abusing me soon after. He would wait till we were alone at home or when everyone was asleep. He'd find me and start touching me, my breasts, between my legs. I didn't like it. It was very confusing and scary.

And I tried never to be home alone w/him again. I'd run out the back door if I heard his truck in the drive. I wasn't always successful.

He said it was his duty as a father to teach me to be a woman.

I learned to get dressed in mere seconds because he loved to walk into my room to catch me naked. I learned to lock the bathroom door to keep him out when I was showering or he would come in and watch me. Every day he would make comments about my developing body. Every night while lying in bed, I listened for his footsteps in the hall.

My childhood was spent navigating living in a home where my perpetrator lived. I never felt safe in my own home.

Why didn't I tell?

Mainly the shame. My trust was destroyed. Remember, the person who was supposed to protect me was hurting me. Who's left - no one in my house. I knew my mom couldn't handle it. He abused her as well. Besides I knew if I told he would take it out on her. I thought I'd be put in a foster home where the dangers were unknown. So, I stayed where I knew my monster. Besides, it wasn't just my story, it was also my family's story. I decided to protect my sister and mom from everyone in our small town knowing.

Only about 1/3 victims disclose as children. The average age of disclosure is 52. I told first when I was about 40 and testified when I was 53. My father has passed, time ran out for me. With the passage of this bill, it will give other survivors time to hold their abusers accountable. It's time to break our silence.

Thank you,
Lesa Patterson-Kinsey, MSW
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