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Testimony Presented To
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by

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Hello. My name is Gerry Sokol and I am writing in regard to S.B. 634 which would raise the statutes of limitations to commence at age 18 for young victims of sexual abuse. I am currently a volunteer at the C.A.R.E. Rape Crisis Center which is located in Washington, Pennsylvania. As a volunteer I have answered calls on the 24 hour hotline, met victims of rape in the emergency room of two local hospitals, and have accompanied children who have gone to court to testify against the perpetrators who have sexually abused them.

One of the reasons that I am so anxious about this bill passing is because I too was a victim of childhood sexual abuse. In my case the abuse took many forms and came from many different members of my own family. Up until February of 1989 I had no idea what a profound effect their actions would have upon my life.

I had known all along that what I had experienced growing up was not right. My father should not have beat me like he did. My grandfather should not have "smooched" with me or touched me like he did. And my sister's husband should not have come into my bed and raped me like he did. But those were the memories that I had to bury in the deepest part of me mind. When any did surface I had always been able to 'lock' them away again.

But in February an old feeling overwhelmed me and there was no way to 'lock' away the memories anymore. That was the first time that I ever told anyone about the abuse. What began then was an incredible journey of healing and self-discovery. With the guidance of three different therapists I was able to face those buried memories. I was able to retrieve forgotten feelings. I grew stronger with each session as I was able to become more aware of just who I was. All

along it was my sister's husband that I feared the most. But as I healed I feared him less and less.

Then I decided to see what kind of legal action I could take against him. I called a lawyer and was told that the statutes were already gone. There was nothing I could do except report the crime to the police in his area, which is what I did. It just so happened that I saw the same police officer who had handled a case against this same person involving my nephew-his own son. The charges were for sexual and physical abuse but were dropped because my nephew did not make a good witness! This person is a known child molester but still there is nothing that can legally be done to get him off the streets.

For me it is a very frustrating feeling. I feel that as a survivor of sexual abuse I have no rights! I have been the one who has had to go through the pain of remembering, the anguish of realizing what I have lost, and the emotional turmoil of recovering-not him. I have been the one who has had to put in hundreds of hours of therapy so I could go on with my life-not him.

The one thing that I wish I could do is to face him in a courtroom and tell him what the consequences of his actions have done to my life. But I realize that that will probably never happen. And this is what I must learn to deal with now-the fact that I may never be able to face him and make him aware.

By passing this bill you will be giving victims more time to heal. It took me over 20 years to face up to the abuse. But now I will do anything I can for anyone who is being or has been abused. With the passage of this bill victims can feel that they do have rights and these rights can be exercised in the courtroom! The sentence that the

perpetrator may receive can never make up for what was taken from the victim, but by going before the judicial system at least the perpetrator is confronted with the criminal aspects of his actions.

Gery Sokol