

3/18/2025

RE: Confidentiality for Community-Based Restorative Justice Programs House File #104

Dear Members of the Minnesota Legislature, thank you for listening to me today.

My name is Sandra Weise. I'm a local restaurateur, mentor, speaker, board member, advocate, daughter, and lifelong Minnesotan.

I am here to share my strong support for House File 104.

As an adult in my 40's, I was attacked in the dark and raped like an animal by a known acquaintance.

House File 104 is a tool for victims like me to mitigate our needs after such a vicious violation.

This bill can foster reclaiming consent, apologies and maybe even forgiveness one day and that deeply matters. This tool can help both sides understand, make amends safely and heal immensely.

This tool is not for everyone but will be invaluable for those that choose it. Our existing tools aren't working when a 40 something woman who is educated, successful, sober, and who is a cop's daughter, does not feel comfortable reporting. If she questions if she will be believed...who can successfully report???

The terror of wondering if traditional reporting will actually help her or further devastate her life and the person causing harm is a spirit crushing reality of sexual assault reporting.

That is why so very few report.

Immediately after an assault, shock floods your body. Even brilliant minds fall victim to their faculties failing them after sexual assault. It's a blur. Your world view is immediately off kilter.

Traumatic shock is a defense mechanism that helps protect your brain and body. It is accompanied by a range of physical and emotional symptoms, numbness, confusion, disassociation, and time and space can seem foggy.

Immediately a rape victim is harshly judged on their ability to recall linear time, critical thought and sharp details all while physically tending to wounds, pain, shock and insomnia. Making life altering decisions is not recommended during a major life event yet rape victims must INSTANTLY choose a course or wait and be judged as less believable because she waited.

Most sexual assault cases are what is called "he said she said" and the courts, lawyers and mediators will very quickly tell victims they are very hard to charge and win. So, it feels like society pushes victims to report yet nothing happens? 6% of rapes are reported and 6% of those reported are charged. We have a flaming issue here.

VICTIMS NEED A MEANINGFUL PROCESS OR WHY BOTHER REPORTING.

House Bill 104 allows victims to participate in a restorative justice process that is humane and finally their choice. Healing and moving on with life is more likely through mutual recognition of the mistake and that is unheard of in the current civil process. When those that have caused harm face the impact of their mistake, that awareness could potentially stop future harm. It's similar to historic "old fashioned" ways community members brokered restoration together with both sides.

No matter how well meaning, rape advocates, police, nurses, court helpers, lawyers or judges intend to be there is no way for them to buffer the devastation from the personal fractures or the humiliating current legal process that unfolds. Often for many years. I don't know one woman in my life that hasn't fielded unwanted sexual touch.

Not one.

When you ask them what they want, the vast majority want acknowledgment of the mistake made and a private apology.

Currently without House Bill 104, the only way to get an apology from anyone is to civilly sue them and require an apology in the settlement (which isn't really an apology) and requires financial damages and legal fees with the grueling, brutal court system. Then of course the victim being branded with the title of gold digging, lying, whore. What a choice.

This bill is a start. Most of us want apologies when we have been wronged and to move on with our lives. Had this bill been available to me, I could have experienced healing, fairness, hope and the justice I would have surely sought in a meaningful way much, much sooner.

Today I am asking you to support bill HF104 and am available for questions.

Sandra Weise

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