

Dear Chair Prozanski and Members of the Senate Judiciary Committee;

I'm writing this to you as a native Oregonian who resided in Washington County for 38 years (most recently in District 12). It is my greatest hope that my story will help encourage you to pass HB 3293, a bill extending the civil statute of limitations for adult victims of sexual violence. This is one of the most difficult things I have ever written, but if it helps even one survivor receive justice, then reliving the trauma is well worth the personal cost. To help you understand why this is so important, it's time I tell you what happened to me.

In the late 1990s through early 2000, I was repeatedly emotionally and sexually assaulted. My first experience having intercourse was by force. When enough was enough and I tried to leave my abuser, he held me at knifepoint in his mother's house on her birthday. And while he claimed he would hurt himself if I walked out, that knife was always pointed at me.

His mother, who I cared for a great deal, had to call the police. When they arrived, they took me into their protection and asked me what I wanted to do. I wanted help, so they took me and my assailant to the hospital and a counselor. This counselor, who was a woman, encouraged me to not press charges for the years of violence I had endured because she claimed everything he had done to me was "out of love." This horrible, misguided advice resulted in no criminal charges being filed at that time, as I believed the guidance the counselor was giving me was in my best interests. I was never made aware of any of my legal options, and at the age of twenty, I had no experience in legal proceedings to understand that the advice bestowed would rob me of justice.

By the time I managed to leave my assailant, had received counseling, and felt prepared to face him in a court of law, the two-year statute of limitations to bring a civil suit had passed. I had evidence; letters, images, police reports, witnesses. But because of an inadequate statute, my rapist benefited from the effects of the trauma he caused me, and never faced any repercussions. Instead, I have been made to pay the price for his crimes against me, both literally and metaphorically. As I understand it, he went on to abuse another partner, something I may have been able to prevent through legal action were it not for the inadequate statute. And in the 20 years between then and now, he has attempted to involve himself in my life again and again, revictimizing and retraumatizing me each time.

Every man and woman who is sexually attacked deserves the right to pursue justice in a time that their rehabilitation and recovery permits, for their health and safety. I beg you to consider how this bill might not only benefit survivors of sexual violence and serve justice to the perpetrators of life-shattering harm, but how holding assailants accountable will also protect future victims from abuse. For these reasons, I ask that you pass this important initiative and send a message to survivors that their lives and stories matter.

Sincerely,
Caryn Peck