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Statement of Gloria Allred

In recent months I was contacted by many men who alleged that they were victims of sexual misconduct and sexual abuse by Dr. Richard Strauss when they were wrestlers at Ohio State University.

Some of the alleged victims had never shared the secret of their abuse with anyone. Some had only told a trusted family member or friend.

Some are only now coming to terms with their victimization and that they had been preyed upon by a sexual predator who took advantage of his position of trust to victimize vulnerable athletes under the guise of examining them and treating them as a physician to the wrestling team at Ohio State.

While each account of the victims varied in some details, all of the victims who contacted me had one thing in common. All wanted the truth to be known and all felt that Ohio State should be accountable to them for having failed to protect them from Dr Strauss.

In short, all wanted justice to be done. Unfortunately, for all of those who contacted me, it appears to be too late to pursue justice in the civil or criminal justice system, because not only is Dr. Strauss deceased, but also because an arbitrary time period set by law called the statute of limitations (SOL) will likely prevent them from seeking justice in the civil and criminal justice systems.

Many victims were not aware that there is a time limit during which they must file a civil case or have a criminal case prosecuted. This new knowledge that the law prevents access to justice for victims of sexual abuse if they do not proceed to file a civil lawsuit or report to law enforcement within a set time period was very disturbing to many of the victims and they decided that they would seek to change the law in Ohio.

Today that needed change has begun in the form of a bill authored by Ohio State Senator Joe Schiavoni. This bill No. I_132_2975-1, would eliminate the statute of limitations in both the criminal and civil justice systems for victims of rape or sexual abuse. For constitutional reasons, however, it is not retroactive.

In California, in 2016, I lobbied and testified for a similar bill which would eliminate the statute of limitations for criminal cases of rape and sexual assault. California Governor Jerry Brown signed that bill into law.

However, we have not yet eliminated the statute of limitations for civil cases of rape and sexual abuse in California as is proposed by Senator Schiavoni in this important bill for Ohio.

I commend Senator Schiavoni for his leadership on this issue and I urge Ohio legislators to co-author and support this legislation.

We must think about who is helped and who is hurt by an arbitrary time limit (SOL). Time limits only benefit the sexual predators and hurt the victims of their abuse, because it denies the victims access to justice and accountability from those who have harmed them.

Such arbitrary time limits fail to take into account that many victims fail to report when they are victimized because they feel that they will be blamed or shamed or not believed if they allege that they were abused.

In the end, however, many of Dr. Strauss' victims have come to understand that they have the right to tell the truth about their lives and they have found the courage to come forward in order to help change the law to benefit other victims of other predators in the future.

Many of these men have sons and daughters and they want the world to be a fairer, safer and better place for them and that is why they are supporting a change in the law. They do not want the courthouse doors to be slammed shut in the face of victims.

We urge legislators, Republicans and Democrats, to support this bill to help victims and we look forward to testifying at a hearing to answer their questions. Current law protects the perpetrators not the victims and needs to be changed. There should no longer be a time limit on justice for victims of rape and sexual assault. If this bill is passed in Ohio, statutes of limitations no longer will be a sexual predator's best friend and a victim's worst enemy.

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November 28, 2018