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Testimony by Attorney Gloria Allred in Support of AB 145

I am here today in support of Assembly Bill 145. For more than 40 years as an attorney, I have been representing adult victims of child sexual abuse and victims of sexual abuse who are still minors.

You may wonder why when you look around the Assembly Judiciary hearing room today, you do not see many child sexual abuse victims in front of you. Where is the 7 year old little girl who has been groomed and then sexually molested for years by her step-father, or her uncle or her mother's boyfriend? Where is the 10 year old little boy who has been sexually victimized by his teacher, his coach, or other trusted individuals?

Where are the children who have kept a secret of their victimization from their mothers, their siblings, their friends, their health care providers, their school counselors, and from all those who love and care for them, because they have been threatened or feel ashamed or because they have been taught to blame themselves or because they think that nobody will believe them?

The answer is simple. Many of these children who have been victimized are in fact sitting in this hearing room today as adult survivors of child sexual abuse or if they are not here they are members of your family or they are your neighbors, friends or co-workers.

Some may be elected officials, some may be parents, some may be members of law enforcement, some may be psychologists and some have entered other professions or occupations.

Many have never told anyone. Some have only told one trusted person. Some have only shared their secret decades after they were abused when they were in counseling for their alcoholism or drug addiction which became part of

their lives and which they thought would help them to escape from the pain of the emotional injuries they suffered as a result of the sexual abuse.

Yes, they are all with us today. Some were abused in Nevada and have moved out of state. Some still reside here. Wherever they are, they are in the lives of all of us and in our hearts.

The question for all of us is how can we help those innocent children who are now adults to achieve some measure of justice for the wrongs that they were forced to suffer as children?

One answer can be found in AB 145 which would extend the statute of limitations for certain civil actions for damages for injuries incurred as a child as a result of sexual abuse or pornography.

This bill is important because by extending the statute of limitations for civil actions on behalf of victims, it will provide access to the civil justice system to those who would otherwise be denied it.

This means that instead of having the courthouse door slammed in their face because it is too late to file a case, the door to justice will remain open for more victims to seek compensation from those who are legally responsible for the harm inflicted on them when they were children.

In short, it would help to empower victims and will assist victims to become survivors. It will also teach the wrongdoers that they must bear the cost of the wrong and be accountable for what they have forced the victims to suffer.

I would also like to emphasize that a vote for AB 145 does not necessarily mean that there will be more civil lawsuits. Opening the door to justice may mean instead that because adult child sexual abuse victims are afforded more rights, they will be able to have the ability to seek confidential settlements without filing a lawsuit, and this settlement with the wrongdoers will assist the victims in paying for their therapy, medical bills and other damages which they have suffered.

In short, the victims will know that they now have the power in the civil justice system to help right the wrong and be active in the pursuit of justice.

A neutral person who is a mediator or a judge can decide what that measure of justice should be, but whatever it is it will be more than either the victim or wrongdoer has ever had in the past.

As a lawyer for many victims, I have seen the empowerment that such justice can bring to victims and their families and how seeking justice can transform their lives.

Tears from pain have become tears of joy as the child who still lives within the adult stands up for himself or herself and as a result wins a measure of justice and a positive outcome that they have been seeking for many years.

I want to thank Assembly member Lisa Krasner and Assembly member Bustamante Adams for sponsoring this important bill.

I urge you to support it for all of the brave children (now adults) who are counting on your vote to help them win the justice and the healing that they will otherwise be denied.

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