

From: Kathryn LaLonde
Sent: Thu, 10 Jun 2021 17:25:23 -0400
To: T9PublicHearing
Subject: Written Comment: Title IX Public Hearing (Sexual Misconduct in K-12 Schools)
Attachments: Written Comment_ Title IX Public Hearing (Sexual assault in K-12 Schools).pdf

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Hello,

My name is Kathryn, and attached is a PDF of my written comment for the Title IX Public Hearing. I have also included the words in my written comment below. Thank you.

"My name is Kathryn and I am a recent high school graduate of Montgomery County, Maryland. When I was just a young girl in middle school, I was manipulated and assaulted by a boy in my grade. He would grope my legs regularly during class and stroke my hair. His friends would laugh at the jokes he made about my body,

calling my legs a "blessing", and nicknaming my body parts. Once, on a ski trip, I was forced to sit next to him on the bus, squished against the window, while he groped my thigh and got uncomfortably close to parts of my body that I did not want to be touched.

He moved my fingers and hands away when I tried to stop him.

It took me two years to reconcile with what had happened to my body when I was twelve. I had never really been taught by my school that what that boy was doing to me was wrong. Although I was uncomfortable when he touched me, I didn't know what to do. I was silent. During my sophomore year of high school, after recognizing

that I had been sexually assaulted when I was younger, I decided to report my assaulter to school officials because he was still groping women.

Unfortunately, I was failed by my school during the reporting process. When I visited my counselor to discuss what had happened to me, I was immediately taken to security to report it, without having time to think or speak to

my parents. The male security guards intimidated me and I had to write a detailed description

of my experience. I was told that if I did not provide the names of other students who had been assaulted by the same perpetrator, my case would not be investigated. They weren't sensitive to my trauma, or how this report might affect me.

In the end, my identity was not protected, and I was mocked by classmates and peers. I even had to sit next to my assaulter a year later, which goes against a policy in my county that supposedly ensures a survivor is not placed in the same class as their abuser. Over the past two years, I have fueled my anger at the system

into reform. Along with my peers, I formed four countywide student initiatives focused on re-writing our county's regulation for sexual misconduct, student and teacher training, and implementing an app and website that provides support resources for students

and options for reporting anonymously.

I am recommending, that, nationally, we reform the system for reporting any form of sexual harassment, assault, and abuse against students. It is key that every school district across the country has an anonymous option for reporting an incident that occurred to them. Too many students, like myself, experienced a terrifying

and intimidating process simply trying to report what happened to us. Students cannot feel safe if the only option they have for reporting is personally speaking to a school administrator about how they were raped.

In addition, all schools must streamline their reporting form and resources into online technology. Students will feel much more comfortable reporting an incident that happened to them by simply opening an app on their phone or visiting a website. It is disappointing that so many school districts are still only providing paper handouts to report sexual misconduct, given the digital age we are living in.

Often, schools will hand students a sheet of paper at the beginning

of the school year where they can report any incident, but no one is going to keep track of a single sheet of paper for an entire year. Students deserve to feel like their school is putting them first, and not throwing issues like sexual misconduct off to the side. These apps and websites can also be an outlet for seeking mental health support or providing recommendations and access to outside resources that specifically provide a place for survivors.

I urge you to consider my recommendations for reform.

The time for change is now. All students deserve to feel safe, secure, and protected by their school."

Kathryn LaLonde

Written Comment: Title IX Public Hearing (Sexual assault in K-12 Schools)

My name is Kathryn and I am a recent high school graduate of Montgomery County, Maryland. When I was just a young girl in middle school, I was manipulated and assaulted by a boy in my grade. He would grope my legs regularly during class and stroke my hair. His friends would laugh at the jokes he made about my body, calling my legs a “blessing”, and nicknaming my body parts. Once, on a ski trip, I was forced to sit next to him on the bus, squished against the window, while he groped my thigh and got uncomfortably close to parts of my body that I did not want to be touched. He moved my fingers and hands away when I tried to stop him.

It took me two years to reconcile with what had happened to my body when I was twelve. I had never really been taught by my school that what that boy was doing to me was wrong. Although I was uncomfortable when he touched me, I didn’t know what to do. I was silent. During my sophomore year of high school, after recognizing that I had been sexually assaulted when I was younger, I decided to report my assaulter to school officials because he was still groping women.

Unfortunately, I was failed by my school during the reporting process. When I visited my counselor to discuss what had happened to me, I was immediately taken to security to report it, without having time to think or speak to my parents. The male security guards intimidated me and I had to write a detailed description of my experience. I was told that if I did not provide the names of other students who had been assaulted by the same perpetrator, my case would not be investigated. They weren’t sensitive to my trauma, or how this report might affect me.

In the end, my identity was not protected, and I was mocked by classmates and peers. I even had to sit next to my assaulter a year later, which goes against a policy in my county that supposedly ensures a survivor is not placed in the same class as their abuser. Over the past two years, I have fueled my anger at the system into reform. Along with my peers, I formed four countywide student initiatives focused on re-writing our county's regulation for sexual misconduct, student and teacher training, and implementing an app and website that provides support resources for students and options for reporting anonymously.

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