



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

State Senate Passes Erin Merryn's Law Aimed at Child Sex Abuse Prevention

DAVID J. VALESKY April 24, 2013

| ISSUE: **CHILDREN, CHILD MOLESTATION**

ALBANY – Legislation co-sponsored by Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) aimed at preventing child sexual abuse passed the New York State Senate today. “Erin Merryn’s Law” (S.2367) would require schools to add child sex abuse prevention to existing curriculum for child abduction. In addition to prevention, this alteration would give critically important information to victims—many of whom do not know there is a way out of their horrific situation.

“As a society, we must do whatever we can to prevent sexual abuse of children,” Senator Valesky said. “Erin’s Law will require schools to add to existing curricula and provide children with age-appropriate information about ways to get help. By giving children a means to feel safe so they can speak up, we can get them out of horrible situations as well as catch and punish their abusers.”

The legislation was brought to New York State by nationally recognized advocate Erin Merryn, who as a child was abused by both a neighbor and a family member. She said she stayed silent due to a combination of threats from her abusers and the lack of knowledge about available help. Merryn broke her silence with the publication of a book, “Stolen Innocence,” when she was a senior in high school.

“I was not educated on not keeping secrets if someone was hurting me. My mission, through this legislation, is to educate children on what I never learned,” Merryn said. “I will not stop until children in all 50 states are protected from sexual abuse.”

“We are grateful to Senator Valesky and the New York State Senate for their leadership in advocating for this legislation,” Randi Bregman, executive director of Vera House, said. “Giving children accurate information about abuse is a critical part of preventing future tragedies.”

The U.S. Centers for Disease Control and Prevention estimates that 1 in 4 women and 1 in 6 men were sexually abused before the age of 18. This means there are more than 42 million adult survivors of child sexual abuse in the U.S. More than 90 percent of sexual abuse victims know their abuser. Half (50 percent) of them are members of the household and 38 percent are acquaintances of the victim, according to the U.S. Department of Justice.

###