



PROSTASIA FOUNDATION

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Representative James Grant
Criminal Justice Subcommittee
417 House Office Building
402 South Monroe Street
Tallahassee, FL 32399-1300

February 14, 2018

Dear Representative Grant,

Sex offender registry and child sexual abuse prevention

I am writing on behalf of Prostasia Foundation, a child protection organization that was recently formed by a group of experts, activists, and survivors of child sexual abuse (CSA). We believe that our society's predominantly reactive approach to child protection is too often harmful to children and other innocent people, and to our constitutional values. Prostasia is dedicated to taking a more evidence-based, prevention-focused approach to protecting children, which upholds human rights.

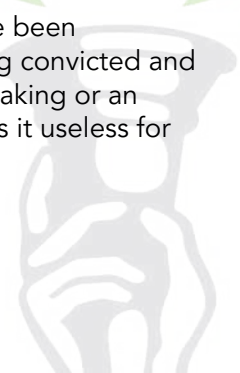
The total lifetime economic burden of child sexual abuse in the United States has been estimated at about \$9.3 billion. Anything that we can do to prevent future offending will pay big dividends, and this is in addition to the incalculable cost of saving children from trauma. But to be effective, prevention interventions must be based on evidence.

Unfortunately, the state sex offender registries established pursuant to the Sex Offender Registration and Notification Act (SORNA) are not based on solid evidence, and this is why they are not effective in actually preventing child sexual abuse.

An enormous amount of money is wasted on these ineffective registries. For example, money is wasted on prosecutions for failure to register and compliance checks which been shown to have no public safety benefit. We could instead take this money and do something else with it, such as investigating rape cases (which have a roughly 30% clearance rate).

Worse, 95% of sexual offending against children is committed by those who have no criminal history, and 90% is perpetrated by someone the child knows and trusts. Even among those who do have a history of sexual offending, the rate of recidivism is very low (about 3.5%). Since sex offender registries therefore have no impact on reducing offending by the large majority of offenders, they create a false sense of security.

Also not to be overlooked are the burdens that registration place on people who may have been convicted of a less serious sexual offence. There are many examples of young people being convicted and placed on the registry for having sex with a close-in-age partner, or for a prank such as streaking or an antisocial act such as public urination. The inclusion of such offenders on the registry makes it useless for identifying those who pose a serious risk to children.



It is imperative that we protect children from sexual abuse, and there are many ways in which we can do that that don't involve the costs and burdens of a public registry. These include better education of minors and adults about the causes of child sexual abuse and its prevention, outreach and social support services to at-risk groups, and research into mental health interventions that could prevent offending.

Recently, Michigan Attorney General Dana Nessel filed two amicus curiae briefs in the cases of *People v. Betts*, and *People v. Snyder* which explain in much greater detail how deficient that state's SORNA scheme is in improving public safety, and examines its constitutional flaws. We commend those briefs to you in full.

Please do not hesitate to contact us for further information about how child sexual abuse can be prevented in a manner that is both effective, fiscally prudent, and constitutionally sound. We believe that Florida's sex offender registration scheme does not meet these criteria and that it cannot be relied upon to protect children from sexual abuse.

Yours sincerely,

Prostasia Foundation