



NEW YORK STATE SENATOR

David J. Valesky

Senator Valesky Takes Action Against Child Sexual Abuse

DAVID J. VALESKY April 29, 2014

| ISSUE: **CRIME, CHILD MOLESTATION**

Senate passes Erin Merryn's Law, Senator Valesky signs on to child abuse prevention campaign

ALBANY – State Senator David J. Valesky (D-Oneida) redoubled his support for programs that combat child sexual abuse today.

Legislation co-sponsored by Senator Valesky 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.

In addition, Senator Valesky signed on as a supporter of the Central New York Darkness to Light Collaboration’s Stewards of Children Campaign, an initiative spearheaded by McMahon Ryan Child Advocacy Center and the YMCA to provide education to adults about the steps they can take to prevent, recognize and react responsibly to child sexual abuse.

“Adults need to know how to recognize a child in distress from sexual abuse, and often the signs can be missed,” Senator Valesky said. “I hope many others join me in educating themselves on this critical issue.”

Senator Valesky joins Vera House, the Syracuse City School District, City of Syracuse Parks and Recreation Department, Onondaga County Sheriff’s office, and Onondaga County District Attorney’s office, among others, in this cause. The Collaboration’s goal is to train 18,000 adults in Central New York—5 percent of the population. More than 1,000 people have completed the training already.

For more information, visit www.mcmahonryan.org.

About child sexual abuse

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.