

Peace of Mind: Strengthening Victim Protections Under Kayleigh's Law

Chairman, Ranking Members, and Members of the Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify today on the importance of strengthening victim protections and ensuring our justice system prioritizes public safety.

My name is Suzette Valladares. I am a State Senator from California, and I serve as Vice-Chair of our Health Committee and a member of our Judiciary Committee.

California has become a warning sign to the rest of the nation. Deeply misguided “criminal justice reforms” have too often come at the expense of survivors. In my commitment to increasing public safety, I have been working with Kayleigh Kozack to enact Kayleigh’s Law in California.

Kayleigh’s Law is grounded in a basic, common-sense principle: victims of serious and violent crime should not have to repeatedly return to court to remain safe from their offenders.

Under current California law, many victims—particularly survivors of sexual assault and other violent crimes—must periodically renew protective orders. In California, this is every 4-7 years depending on the crime, or 15 years for felony domestic violence. This process forces victims to relive trauma, navigate hurdles, and face the very real risk that protections could lapse.

Kayleigh’s Law, as before you and the version I introduced in 2025 and at the beginning of this year, would allow courts to issue lifetime protective orders at sentencing for the most dangerous offenders.

This is not a radical concept. It is a practical safeguard that aligns consequences for offenders with the lasting impact their crimes have on victims. Yet efforts like this have faced resistance in my home state. That should concern every single one of us.

Domestic violence and felony sex offenses continue to inflict profound harm in California and across the country, particularly on women, children, and minority communities. Every minute in the United States someone is assaulted, and every 9 minutes that victim is a child¹. Nationally 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men experience severe physical violence from an

¹ [Facts and Statistics: The Scope of the Problem - RAINN](#)

intimate partner during their lifetime, and 3 in 10 women have been raped². Children are often caught in the same cycle of violence. Children exposed to violence in the home are 15 times more likely to be physically and/or sexually assaulted than the national average³. Minority victims face even greater risks: indigenous Americans are twice as likely to experience sexual assault as compared to all races⁴. In California, there are hundreds of thousands of active restraining orders at any given time. A statewide analysis found over 227,000 active restraining orders, the majority tied to domestic violence.⁵ These numbers show why long-term protective orders are essential in serious domestic violence and felony sex offense cases: for many victims, the danger does not end when the sentence begins.

To understand the urgency of Kayleigh's Law, you have to look at the broader context of California's public safety challenges.

In recent years, California's majority has adopted policies that have reduced penalties, expanded early release, limited tools available to law enforcement and prosecutors, and created more barriers for victims seeking protection. These policies are often described as reform by my democratic colleagues, but when you talk to survivors, to families, and to communities, you hear something very different. You hear that the system no longer feels like it's on their side.

Under Senate Bill 357 from 2022, the state repealed the crime of loitering with intent to engage in prostitution, removing a tool long used by law enforcement to intervene in street-level exploitation and identify potential trafficking victims. This built on lenient policies like Proposition 47 from 2014, which reclassified a range of offenses from felonies to misdemeanors, contributing in some jurisdictions to increases in reported low-level crime and reducing leverage to detain repeat offenders. Laws like these have made it difficult for law enforcement to disrupt trafficking networks and intervene early with vulnerable individuals.

I want to share a story of a woman that was shared with me by the California District Attorney's Association. She was 15 years old when she was victimized, at the hands of a 41 year old. During two trials lasting 4 years, the perpetrator kept in contact with her. Even going so far as to manipulate her to perjure herself on the stand to protect him. At one point

² [Domestic Violence Statistics - The Hotline](#)

³ [Domestic Violence Statistics - The Hotline](#)

⁴ [Statistics: Victims of Sexual Violence - RAINN](#)

⁵ [Temporary Restraining Orders \(TRO\) in California | Process, Rights & Legal Protections](#)

he fired his attorney so he could have the opportunity to cross-examine her. This is absolutely vile.

He was convicted and served his time and she has tried to move on and start a family. He has now been released and she now lives in fear that, with him no longer being behind bars, he will try to contact her or her family.

Kayleigh's Law is a direct response to that uncertainty. It provides certainty and stability in a system that currently offers neither.

Nowhere is this disconnect clearer than in California's handling of sexually violent predators. These are individuals the state itself has determined are likely to reoffend. And yet, time and time again, we see these offenders placed into communities with limited transparency, limited local input, and limited consideration for the victims who are forced to live with the consequence.

In August of 1999, Gregory Lee Vogelsang was convicted of more than two dozen child molestation and kidnapping charges involving 5 boys. He served 27 years of a 355 year-to-life- sentence and was granted parole late last year. He was eligible for early parole under California's elderly parole law, which was established in 2018. More recent legislation, under Assembly Bill 3234 from 2021, makes an inmate 50 years or older who has served at least 20 years of their sentence eligible. News of Vogelsang's early release came shortly after notification that David Allen Funston would be released early from his 1999 conviction of kidnapping and sexually assaulting multiple children, which sentenced him to 20 years and three life sentences in prison. Funston has been held under new charges in his case thanks to the due diligence of the Placer County District Attorney's Office.

Think about that for a moment. We are asking victims to trust a system that cannot guarantee where their high-risk offender will be placed, cannot guarantee long-term separation, and tells those same victims that they need to come back to court again and again to maintain a piece of paper for protection. This is not a system that works for victims, it works against them. We have lost balance.

I introduced Kayleigh's Law again this year as Senate Bill 1395. The original proposal called for a lifetime protective order for child survivors of serious felonies, violent felonies, and felony sex offenses. But in a legislature controlled by a Democratic majority, that standard was scaled back to 25 years and limited only to victims of felony sex offenses.

Now, 25 years is certainly better than the current 4-to-7-year cycle that forces survivors back into court to relive their trauma. But it falls short. It still tells survivors that their safety has an expiration date and that one day the burden will fall on them again to seek protection.

In a state that has some of the highest rates of sexual violence, we should be leading, not watering down. Senate Bill 1395 is a step forward, but it is not the full measure of justice survivors deserve, and I am committed to keep fighting.

At its core, this is an issue of restoring balance.

Kayleigh's Law will not overhaul a broken justice system in California. It does not eliminate due process or impose sweeping new mandates. It affirms a justice system that says that in the most serious cases, we are going to prioritize certainty for victims over convenience for offenders.

Kayleigh's Law is not just a policy proposal, it is a recognition that victims deserve lasting protection, not temporary relief.

California's experience should serve as both a warning and an opportunity. It shows what happens when policies drift too far in one direction, when the focus shifts away from accountability and public safety.

At the end of the day, this is not complicated. Victims of violent crime deserve to feel safe, not just for a short period of time or until their next court date, but for the long term.

This reform offers a clear, measured solution. It puts victims first, reduces unnecessary retraumatization, and strengthens the integrity of the justice system.

Thank you for your consideration. I look forward to your questions.