

H-8065

To the members of the RI General Assembly,

My name is Joseph Ricci, I am a lifelong resident of Rhode Island, currently living in Cranston. I am a Detective with the Lincoln Police Department, and have been a Police Officer for 12 and ½ years. Part of my duties include the registration of all Sex Offenders living in Lincoln and ensuring their compliance with all registration laws.

Sex Offenders are leveled after their convictions, from I to III, according to how likely it is that a Sex Offender will reoffend and commit another sex crime. When I first started this, the law stated that level I and II Offenders could not live within 300 feet of a school. The law then stated that a level III Offender could not live within 1000 feet of a school. However, in March of 2023, a lawsuit resulted in a Federal Judge overturning the law regarding the 1000 feet rule for level III Sex Offenders. Since that time, there has been no law regarding how close or far away a level 3 Sex Offender can live from a school. I figured this would eventually be fixed, the law just needed to be updated, but nothing has been done about it. The law said that Level I and II Sex Offenders can't live within 300 feet from a school, but now a level III Offender, the ones most likely to reoffend, can live as close as they want to a school. The places we drop off our children to learn, and hope they are safe when not in our care. I personally couldn't believe it. Almost immediately in Lincoln, a level III Sex Offender moved back in with his parents who lived directly next door to the school Northern RI Collaborative. The exact situation that the law was trying to prevent from happening. Luckily this only lasted a few months as the school shutdown and vacated that building.

I knew something needed to be done, so I eventually emailed my local Representative, Representative Fascia, and explained the situation asking for his help. I immediately got a response from him and we discussed the matter, leading him to put forward this bill.

300 feet from a school is not far at all. It is the minimum that we can do to protect our children. If a Sex Offender is living closer than 300 feet from a school, they could be sitting in their house, looking out the window all day and staring at our children while they are playing at recess. That may seem innocent for most

people, but not for Offenders that have sexually molested children. They look at children differently and may be watching our children to choose their next victim. Many Sex Offenders have committed sex crimes more than once. We need to protect our children, and make it harder for someone to prey upon them. I get calls all the time from concerned citizens that certain sex offenders live too close to a school in their opinion, or too close to a daycare. Almost always the offender is living far enough away according to the law, but clearly many citizens don't believe it is far enough. This bill will at least make every sex offender live at least 300 feet from a school.

I have 2 sons myself, one that is 3 years old, and one that is 9 months old. I fear for the day when I have to send my children to school, and there is no law in place preventing all Sex Offenders from living near the school. As parents and especially as Fathers, our jobs are to protect our children. When I send my child to school, I am not going to be there to protect them myself. I must rely on the teachers and staff to ensure my children are safe. I would certainly feel more comfortable, as I know others would, if at a bare minimum, all Sex Offenders couldn't live within 300 feet of the school. I ask that you please pass this bill and correct this issue. Thank you.

Sincerely,

Joseph Ricci III

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Joseph Ricci III', written in a cursive style.