

Partnership Statement in Support of Safer Schools

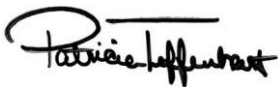
As the public is becoming increasingly aware, sexual abuse and violence often go unreported and even worse than that, disclosures are often ignored or dismissed by individuals and/or systems protecting their own interests. And, as high-profile cases relating to settlements and non-disclosure agreements gain increased attention, we are compelled to ensure that New Jersey protects some of our most vulnerable citizens – children.

The American Association of University Women conducted a national survey in 2000 which found that an estimated 290,000 students experienced some sort of physical sexual abuse by a public school employee in the previous decade. Another major study, commissioned by the U.S. Department of Education found that nearly 10 percent of U.S. public school students reported having been targeted with sexual attention by school employees.

In instances where these situations are shared with school administrators, they are often settled behind closed doors, finalized with a non-disclosure agreement barring either party from sharing information about the conduct. The result? [Released employees take jobs in new unsuspecting towns](#), their sexual abuse of children in one district kept a secret, allowing them to stealthily slip into the lives of a new community of innocent children.

The [New Jersey Coalition Against Sexual Assault](#), [Prevent Child Abuse New Jersey](#), and sixteen other organizations (see below) **are calling on all New Jersey legislators to support safer schools by voting in favor of** (previous session) [A4442/S2917](#), which prohibits a school district, charter school, or contracted service provider holding a contract with a school district or charter school from employing a person serving in a position which involves regular contact with students unless the employer conducts a review of the employment history of the applicant by contacting former and current employers and requesting information regarding child abuse and sexual misconduct allegations.

The bottom line is that allowing schools to hide these crimes and allowing offenders to get another job and abuse more children has to stop. While the vast majority of school teachers and other school employees are dedicated professionals to help our children learn and grow, a small percentage take advantage of their positions of power, gain the trust of students and use their access with youth to commit crimes of sexual abuse. This bill is a common sense approach, which has passed unanimously in several other states, that can better protect our children from crimes that can devastate their success in education, health and life's future opportunities.



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Advocates for Children of New Jersey * CARES Institute Rowan Medicine * Catholic Charities, Diocese of Camden, Inc. * County Prosecutors Association of New Jersey * Court Appointed Special Advocates (CASA) of New Jersey, Inc. * Foster & Adoptive Family Services, Inc. * National Council of Jewish Women Bergen County Section * National Council of Jewish Women, Essex County Section * New Jersey Child Assault Prevention * New Jersey Children's Alliance * New Jersey Coalition to End Domestic Violence * New Jersey PTA * NJ Taskforce on Child Abuse & Neglect-Protection Committee * NJ YMCA State Alliance * Parents Anonymous of New Jersey Inc. * The Dorothy B. Hersh Regional Diagnostic and Treatment Center * Wynona's House Child Advocacy Center, Inc.