

HOUSE JOINT RESOLUTION 127

By Sparks

A RESOLUTION to increase awareness of sexual abuse and the substance abuse and crime that result from sexual abuse.

WHEREAS, each year, there are approximately 293,000 victims of sexual assault, which is defined by the United States Department of Justice as any type of sexual contact or behavior that occurs without the explicit consent of the recipient; and

WHEREAS, seventy percent of sexual assaults are not reported to the police, and the majority of offenders will not spend time in jail; these inequities can result in victims feeling imprisoned by their trauma; and

WHEREAS, victims of sexual abuse are three times more likely than the average person to suffer from depression and six times more likely to suffer from posttraumatic stress disorder; and

WHEREAS, some victims of sexual abuse try to cope through substance abuse; studies report that sexual abuse victims are thirteen times more likely to abuse alcohol and twenty-six times more likely to abuse drugs than those who have not been sexually abused; and

WHEREAS, victims of sexual abuse may misuse drugs and alcohol to cope with or escape from the trauma of sexual abuse as a form of self-medication, to help deal with low self-esteem or feelings of loneliness, or as a manifestation of self-harm or self-destructive behavior; and

WHEREAS, children with parents who abuse drugs or alcohol are much more likely to experience sexual abuse. The problem is compounded by the fact that individuals who experience sexual abuse as children are much more likely to abuse drugs or alcohol as adults, thus continuing the cycle; and

WHEREAS, studies have also found that those who are abused early in life may fall into relationships in which violence or criminal behavior is the norm; and

WHEREAS, those who are abused repeatedly internalize their feelings and may eventually reach a threshold at which their repressed emotions turn outward and aggressive—perhaps pushing them to the point of criminal behavior; and

WHEREAS, it is vitally important that victims of sexual abuse receive appropriate treatment and care that involve understanding, recognizing, and responding to the effects of all types of trauma to help them become survivors and rebuild a sense of control and empowerment; now, therefore,

BE IT RESOLVED BY THE HOUSE OF REPRESENTATIVES OF THE ONE HUNDRED ELEVENTH GENERAL ASSEMBLY OF THE STATE OF TENNESSEE, THE SENATE CONCURRING, that the State of Tennessee must increase awareness of the tragedy of sexual abuse and the substance abuse and crime that can result from sexual abuse and dedicate the State's resources to the delivery of appropriate treatment for victims of sexual abuse.