

Rep. Kay Bill to Strengthen Mandatory Reporting Requirements for Child Sex Abuse passes Committee Unanimously

February 23 2012 1:09 PM

Springfield, IL... Legislation introduced by Illinois State Representative Dwight Kay (R - Glen Carbon) that would strengthen requirements for reporting potential child sex abuse to authorities passed unanimously from a House committee this morning.

Presenting the bill that was introduced in response to the child sex abuse scandal at Penn State, Rep. Kay told the Judiciary II Criminal Law Committee that he wants to tighten up Illinois law.

"We have some very good laws in Illinois, but at the present time in regard to a situation like at Penn State, we have what I would refer to as 'passive reporting'. The purpose of these amendments to the current law is to tighten up our reporting and close the loopholes in our reporting laws," Rep. Kay told the committee.

Under the current Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act, individuals holding certain occupations are required to report to the Department of Children and Family Services a reasonable belief that a child they have encountered in in their official capacity has been abused or neglected. Rep. Kay's legislation will strengthen the current law by explicitly defining additional individuals as mandatory reporters.

"Illinois law requires anyone who believes they have encountered abuse to report it to DCFS with the option of letting their superior know. In Pennsylvania, individuals are only required to let their superior know and the superior is the only one required to report the abuse to Pennsylvania's Department of Public Welfare," Kay explained. "So while Illinois law is already stronger than Pennsylvania's, there were some areas that could be improved."

House Bill 3887 will make the following changes:

* The Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act will apply to personnel of institutions of higher education. Current law uses the language "school personnel", which is not always interpreted to apply to colleges and universities.

* The Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act will apply to personnel of recreational or athletic programs or facilities. Current law only applies to recreational program or facility personnel, but does not specifically make reference to athletic coaches or staff.

* Adds "Early Intervention Providers", as defined by the Early Intervention Services System Act, to the list of individuals subject to the Abused and Neglected Child Reporting Act.

After passing out of the committee unanimously, House Bill 3887 will now go before the full House of Representatives for consideration.