



Sexual
Violence
Prevention
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To:

Colorado Senate Judiciary Committee

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Dear Members of the Colorado Senate Judiciary Committee,

Thank you for the opportunity to testify virtually and submit this written endorsement. I am the CEO of the Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA). We strongly urge the Senate Judiciary Committee to pass HB26-1123, 'Preventing Sexual Abuse in Jails.'

In July of 2025, former Jail Commander Edward Aber was charged with 117 counts of invasion of privacy after viewing more than 100 videos of strip searches conducted on women incarcerated at La Plata County Jail. He viewed these videos over 3,000 times, all for his own sexual gratification. Some of these incarcerated women are pursuing legal action. The SVPA stands firmly with them.

Commander Aber is not an outlier. He is a symptom of a system that was permitting state sexual violence. It is critical that we understand what that means. When a system allows invasive searches to be routinely recorded, fails to strictly control access to that footage, and lacks strong accountability mechanisms, it creates the conditions for sexual violence to occur and continue.

At the SVPA, we call this state sexual violence. State sexual violence is when sexual harm is required, allowed, or ignored by government agents or institutions.

It takes two forms: sanctioned and tolerated. State-sanctioned sexual violence is when the government itself allows or requires nonconsensual sexual act. This is often justified as necessary for 'safety' or 'security.' Strip and cavity searches are a clear example. Currently, Colorado law permits officers to forcibly expose and examine people's genitalia without consent and record it all on video. That is state-sanctioned sexual violence that this bill will address.

State-tolerated sexual violence when sexual harm is technically illegal, but the system allows it to continue by failing to stop it or hold anyone accountable. Commander Aber viewed thousands of recordings of women being forcefully stripped and recorded. Not once or twice. Not accidentally. Not for work purposes. Over 3,000 times. That did not happen in a vacuum. It happened because the system around him failed to catch it, failed to prevent it, and failed to protect those women. That is state-tolerated sexual violence that this bill will address.

I am deeply grateful to the Colorado Coalition Against Sexual Assault (CCASA) for their extraordinary advocacy and leadership in drafting this legislation. HB26-1123 directly addresses the structural conditions that allowed state sexual violence to persist in Colorado.

It will prevent state-sanctioned sexual violence by requiring that two officers independently determine 'reasonable belief' before any strip search is conducted, and that the reason and results are documented. It will prevent state-tolerated sexual violence by limiting the recording of strip searches, restricting access to footage showing nudity, barring reproduction of such recordings, and protecting whistleblowers who come forward. It will also strengthen reporting, oversight, and accountability systems under the Prison Rape Elimination Act (PREA) ensuring incarcerated people know their rights, have access to advocacy services, and that all complaints are processed adequately.

Passing this bill will not heal the hundreds of people who have already been harmed. That truth sits heavy with me and it should certainly sit heavy with all of you. The Colorado government failed to protect these women. Colorado laws will continue to cause state sexual violence until there is change. Let the grief and shame of this moment propel you to pass HB26-1123.

Once law, this bill will transform the systems that allowed these egregious harms. This is a massive step towards preventing state sexual violence. You can set the standard for the rest of the country.

I speak as an expert in sexual violence prevention. I speak as the CEO of the SVPA. Most importantly, I speak as a survivor. Pass HB26-1123.

Colorado has the opportunity to right its wrongs and lead the nation in confronting state sexual violence. This is not just a bill. It is the beginning of a movement.

Thank you,



Omny Miranda Martone
Founder and CEO
Sexual Violence Prevention Association (SVPA)