



## For Immediate Release

### Parents United RI condemns sexual assault victim shaming and announces new legislative initiative regarding statute of limitations

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**GLOCESTER RI** - During the 2022 legislative session, Parents United RI has fiercely advocated for the passage of S2219 and H8230, which would close a loophole in the RI General Law that allows those in positions of authority to have sexual contact with children as young as 14 years old. At present, the Senate bill S2219 by Sen. Jessica de la Cruz has passed 37-0 on the Senate floor and H8230 by Rep. Julie Casimiro passed out of the House Judiciary Committee with a vote of 12-3.<sup>1</sup> Both bills are scheduled for a floor vote in the House on Tuesday, June 20th. The House companion bill is scheduled for a Senate floor vote on Tuesday as well.

The stellar reporting of Tim White<sup>2</sup> and his interviews with the multiple witnesses who have bravely come forward to tell their story on a well-respected news program was undermined by the comments made on the Dan Yorke State of Mind program, which also airs on WPRI. "It is hard to imagine the magnification of trauma that the victims must have experienced upon hearing that according to Dan Yorke, there was a 'silent athletic community' that believed the Naked Fat Testing and Naked Puberty testing was 'no big deal' said Laurie Gaddis Barrett. "Parents United RI stands with and supports all victims of sexual predation and abuse. We cannot excuse the victim shaming and blaming mentality that only adds additional pain and suffering to

their lived experience. We fully believe in the due process of law, and encourage everyone to wait for the final results of each investigation before making a personal judgment."

Jody Stone, a parent from East Greenwich where a similar sexual scandal was previously investigated says, "Child victim shaming is simply unacceptable." In her opinion, "Dan Yorke no longer represents a stable 'State of Mind.' "

Bob Chiaradio, who gave testimony in support of both bills, was similarly displeased with Dan Yorke's analysis. He says "Yorke has become lazy, and rests on his own journalistic laurels. People [who shame victims of sexual predation] are the reason that bills like S2219 and H8230 will hopefully become law."

"What was most concerning to me was learning of a second interview between Dan Yorke and Tim White, this time on WPRO, <sup>3</sup> where it was confirmed that at least one of the victims was indeed re-traumatized by a media personality casting doubt on the situation" said Barrett. "It's unconscionable that anyone, anywhere, would see a situation that has made international news and spawned local, state, and federal investigations and then attempt to take a nuanced approach. The response should be unequivocally one of concern for the victims. In my opinion, you don't see 4 major investigations into a situation when it's not a big deal, and it's intellectually dishonest to pretend otherwise. We aren't talking about towel snapping among players in a locker room. It's incredible to listen to an on-air personality repeatedly state on multiple platforms that it's 'no big deal' to spend decades having players and prospective players strip naked alone with a coach in an office."

We understand that WPRO is committed to providing a forum where many different points of view can be discussed during this important time in society. We recall an episode from November 4, 2021, shortly after the story broke, where Dan Yorke claimed that "we'd be laughing" if a similar situation occurred back in "his day" of playing sports.<sup>4</sup>

Nicole Solas, advocate for the legislation says, "Dan Yorke is obsessed with defending the inappropriate behavior of his good friend Aaron Thomas who pressured students to strip naked and be touched. This isn't media. This is bromance." She continued, "Dan Yorke is why children don't come forward with

allegations of sexual abuse. Adults shame them under the banner of fairness to the accused."

We reached out to Dan Yorke for comment, but he has not yet responded.

It is our position that the victim shaming will likely result in hesitancy to come forward for other victims. This is the reason that Parents United RI will be seeking to work with legislators in the next session to introduce bills extending the statute of limitation for third-degree sexual assault.

According to Barrett, "For the victims, as well as the parents of the affected victims, this is a very big deal indeed."

(1) Voting "No" were Rep. Jason Knight, Rep. Edith Ajello, and Rep. Leonela Felix. Rep. Justine Caldwell, who represents East Greenwich, was not present, although students in her district were likely impacted by this loophole. See

<https://www.providencejournal.com/story/news/education/2022/04/12/east-greenwich-volleyball-assistant-coach-sexually-harassed-team-years/7289953001/> Leader Blake Filippi and Speaker Shekarchi used ex-officio privilege to vote in favor of the bill during Committee.

<https://ritv.devosvideo.com/show?video=b6b4509a7e18&apg=a734473b>

(2) <https://www.wpri.com/target-12/exclusive-former-nk-students-share-stories-of-trauma-from-naked-fat-tests/>

(3) <https://omny.fm/shows/the-dan-yorke-show/tim-white-wpri-talks-his-investigation-into-former>

(4) <https://anchor.fm/john-depetro-show/episodes/Thur-11421-WPRO-Dan-Yorke-laughs-and-defends-North-Kingstown-coach-Aaron-Thomas-over-naked-test-e19piqm>

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**#ParentsUnitedRI** is a grassroots movement of mothers, fathers, and concerned citizen groups across Rhode Island .who are banding together to preserve the rights of parents when it comes to their children's education and health.

Our core belief is that parents - *not government ideologues* - have the moral and legal right to determine our children's educational and health paths. Our schools belong to all of us, not just the handful of special interest activists who sit on our school boards and appointed school system positions. It's time to put students and families first!



Laurie Gaddis Barrett, Parents United RI, Glocester, Rhode Island

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