

Dear Supporter of Presentation High School, our Alma Mater,

What if your teenage daughter told a school administrator that her teacher or coach inappropriately touched, molested, or otherwise abused her? You would expect the school to report the abuse to the police. Not just because it's the law—because it's the right thing to do to protect your child and other children.

Unfortunately, for over twenty Pres girls, that did not occur. Over the past few months, we have learned those girls reported inappropriate behavior and sexual abuse to PHS, but their complaints were not forwarded to law enforcement. We are distressed by these accounts. Here are just four of them:

- **2013:** Multiple students reported inappropriate behavior by their PHS coach toward a 14-year-old girl. The coach remained on staff. Months later, that coach sexually assaulted the girl.
- **2006:** A 14-year-old girl told her counselor her PHS teacher was sexually harassing and inappropriately touching her. The counselor informed her she was not the first to complain about the teacher and to wait out the year.
- **1990:** A 16-year-old girl was sexually assaulted by her PHS teacher. She tried to report the assault three times to PHS, but the administration intimidated and silenced her.
- **1986:** The parents of a 16-year-old girl wrote a letter to the principal about inappropriate touching and behavior by a PHS teacher. The principal never replied. Instead, that teacher confronted the victim about the letter. A few years later, he committed felony sexual assault on a different girl.

The victims' accounts have been supported by documentation and multiple witnesses: teachers, parents, and other students. Several parents said their complaints were dismissed or ignored, and several teachers quit in protest of the administration's mishandling of reported abuse.

Child abuse reporting laws are simple: when a child reports abuse, you must call the police immediately. You do not investigate or look for evidence; you call the police. Unfortunately, for over twenty girls, that did not happen.

We believe these brave women, and they deserve to finally be heard and have their accounts investigated. The San Jose Police Department is conducting a criminal investigation into possible violations in reporting laws, and over 6,600 supporters have signed a petition asking for an independent investigation, as recommended by the National Association of Independent Schools (NAIS).

Because of the seriousness of this matter, **we ask that you temporarily withhold your donations to PHS until they agree to that independent investigation** and make permanent changes to ensure child safety is the top priority for all Pres girls.

The victims don't want money or lawsuits; **they just want safety to be the top priority for all students at PHS.** They don't want any girl to suffer how they did.

We are not asking you to make any judgements. We are asking you to stand up for the “least of our brothers and sisters” and help us find out what went wrong—so as a community we can ensure it doesn't happen again. PHS taught us to stand up for what is right, no matter how difficult.

Sincerely,

Victims and Alumnae in support of Making Pres Safe for all students

Not Words, But Deeds

Child abuse reporting laws are designed to protect all our children. Even one mishandled report of childhood sexual abuse is too many. Please listen to the survivors' stories and believe the brave women who have come forward.

“Had the administration dealt appropriately with my complaint, other young women would not have been subjected to this abuser.”

– **Leslie Peddicord Gelfand, 1984-1986 PHS victim**

“The trauma I suffered when trying to report what happened my senior year at Presentation is honestly as difficult, if not more difficult, to reflect on than the abuse itself.”

– **Jane Doe, 1990 PHS victim of felony sexual assault**

“My classmates and I should have been protected from the harassment we endured that school year. Instead, the school administration dismissed our complaint. As a direct result, I transferred out of Presentation High School at the end of the school year.”

– **Shelby Rusconi, 2006-2007 PHS victim**

“When I made my report, I was shocked to hear my counselor say that I wasn't the first person to share these complaints about him. That they had been aware of his behavior since early in the school year. Her attitude was flippant, unsupportive, and unconcerned. She did not ask about my well-being, offer to intervene, or facilitate a conversation. Instead she told me not to worry, that he wouldn't be coming back next year. She told me not to repeat what she had shared with me, she told me to ‘keep that under my hat.’”

– **Katharine, 2006-2007 PHS victim**

“I was never aware of the options, be it legal, emotional, or physical help. The counselor failed me and failed in her legal duty to report my assault to law enforcement.”

– **Kaitlin McGrath, 2010 victim**

“Presentation had numerous opportunities to stop this employee, a water polo coach, yet they chose to break mandatory reporter laws by failing to notify law enforcement about suspected child sexual abuse. This failure led directly to multiple sexual assaults being committed upon my daughter, causing her to suffer extreme emotional damage which continues 4 years later until the present time.”

– **Dina Leonis, mother of a 2013-2014 PHS victim**

“The [PHS] Board of Directors and the school administration continue to stand by their past decisions. They claim that many of the allegations were not reported in the past, or [that] today's reports do not reflect the information provided in the past. Unfortunately, this is a pattern we have often encountered in cases of institutional abuse. Survivors who muster the courage to speak out are denigrated instead of being thanked for their concern. In almost every case, what ultimately emerges is a longstanding cover-up of sexual abuse that was known by officials.”

– **SNAP, the Survivors Network, February 2018 Media Statement**

Visit **MakePresSafe.com** for more information.

Then the King will reply, “Truly I say to you, whatever you did to one of the **least** of these **brothers** and **sisters** of mine, you did it to me.”– **Matthew 25:40**