

**Testimony in opposition of LD 1215**  
**the Committee on Criminal Justice and Public Safety**  
April 7, 2025

Senator Beebe-Center, Representative Hasenfus and distinguished members of the Committee:

My name is Sarah Johnson and I am a resident of Sanford.

I am writing in opposition of LD 1215, An Act Regarding Residency Restrictions for Sex Offenders.

Some of the major factors to successful reentry are obtaining and retaining stable housing and employment, and family and community connections. Residency restrictions are often a barrier to each. These restrictions may prevent someone from moving back into a supportive family home, or a home where they can help support others.

There is research data countering some of the most egregious myths regarding people convicted of sex offenses, including that offenders choose victims based on residential proximity, or that those convicted of sex offenses will be repeat offenders (I have submitted separate testimony with a Bureau of Justice Statistics report showing the low recidivism rates of those convicted of sex offenses).

Rather than cite and include studies here, I submit some of the: [Twenty Findings of Research on Residential Restrictions for Sex Offenders and the Iowa Experience with Similar Policies from the Kansas Department of Corrections](#) website.

1. Housing restrictions appear to be based largely on three myths that are repeatedly propagated by the media: 1) all sex offenders reoffend; 2) treatment does not work; and 3) the concept of “stranger danger.” Research does not support these myths, but there is research to suggest that such policies may ultimately be counterproductive. Sex offender residence restrictions. A Report to the Florida Legislature, October 2005, Jill S. Levinson, Ph.D.
2. Research shows that there is no correlation between residency restrictions and reducing sex offenses against children or improving the safety of children. Iowa County Attorneys Association
3. The resulting damage to the reliability of the sex offender registry does not serve the interests of public safety. Iowa County Attorneys Association
4. There is no demonstrated protective effect of the residency requirement that justifies the huge draining of scarce law enforcement resources in the effort to enforce the restriction. Iowa County Attorneys Association
5. Many prosecutors have observed that the numerous negative consequences of the lifetime residency restriction has caused a reduction in the number of confessions made by offenders in cases where defendants usually confess after disclosure of the offense by the child. In addition, there are more refusals by defendants charged with sex offenses to enter plea agreements. Plea agreements are necessary in many cases involving child victims in order to protect the children from trauma of the trial process. Iowa County Attorneys Association

6. [This policy] is contrary to well-established principles of treatment and rehabilitation of sex offenders....These goals are severely impaired by the residency restriction, compromising the safety of children by obstructing the use of the best known corrections practice. Iowa County Attorneys Association
7. The sex offender residency restriction was a very well intentioned effort to keep the children of our communities safe from sex offenders. It has, however, had unintended consequences that effectively decrease community safety. Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
8. ... the Board of the Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault joined the Iowa County Attorneys Association in stating that these unintended consequences warrant replacing the residency restriction with more effective measures. Iowa Coalition Against Sexual Assault
9. Housing restrictions have passed in most localities with little resistance. Child safety is rightly the primary concern when sex offender restrictions are imposed. It seems to make sense that decreasing access to potential victims would be a feasible strategy to preventing sex crimes. There is no evidence, however, that such laws are effective in reducing recidivistic sexual violence. On the other hand, such laws aggravate the scarcity of housing options for sex offenders, forcing them out of metropolitan areas and farther away from the social support, employment opportunities and social services that are known to aid offenders in successful community re-entry. Sex offender residence restrictions. A Report to the Florida Legislature, October 2005, Jill S. Levinson, Ph.D.
10. Despite overwhelming public and political support, there is no evidence that proximity to schools increases recidivism, or, conversely, that housing restrictions reduce reoffending or increase community safety. Sex offender residence restrictions. A Report to the Florida Legislature, October 2005, Jill S. Levinson, Ph.D.
11. Based on the examination of level three re-offenders, there were no examples that residential proximity to a park or school was a contributing factor in any of the sexual re-offenses noted... Enhanced safety due to proximity restrictions may be a comfort factor for the general public, but it does not have any basis in fact...it appears that a sex offender attracted to such locations for purposes of committing a crime is more likely to travel to another neighborhood on order to in secret rather than in a neighborhood where his or her picture is well known. Level Three Sex Offenders Residential Placement Issues, 2003 Report to the Legislature, Minnesota Department of Corrections
12. Having such restrictions in the cities of Minneapolis and St. Paul would likely force level three offenders to move to more rural areas that would not contain nearby schools and parks but would pose other problems, such as high concentration of offenders with no ties to the community; isolation; lack of work, education and treatment options; and an increase in the distance traveled by agents who supervise offenders. Again, no evidence points to any effect on offense rates of school proximity residential restrictions. Level Three Sex Offenders Residential Placement Issues, 2003 Report to the Legislature, Minnesota Department of Corrections
13. Since blanket proximity restrictions on residential locations of level three offenders do not enhance community safety, the current offender-by-offender restrictions should be retained. Proximity restrictions, based on circumstances on an individual offender, serve as a valuable supervision tool...Most of these supervision proximity restrictions address the issue of the offender associating or interacting with children or minors, rather than where the offender resides. Level Three Sex Offenders Residential Placement Issues, 2003 Report to the Legislature, Minnesota Department of Corrections

14. A tight web of supervision, treatment and surveillance may be more important in maintaining community safety than where a sex offender resides. Report on Safety Issues Raised by Living Arrangements for and Location of Sex Offenders in the Community; Colorado Department of Public Safety, Division of Criminal justice, Sex Offender Management Board.

I hope you will oppose this LD1215.

Thank you for your time and consideration.

Sarah Johnson

Sanford, Maine.

<https://www.doc.ks.gov/publications/CFS/sex-offender-housing-restrictions>