

Good afternoon,

My name is Brittany Smith and i am Cadences mother. My daughter was sexually assaulted by her uncle repeatedly for 3 years. She was seen at the child advocacy center at the age of 11, about a year after the abuse ended and the day after she came forward. I cannot express enough how valuable having the video from the CAC intake was to Cadences mental health. As a result of the years of abuse my daughter suffers from PTSD, severe depression and suicidal thoughts. Her abuser threatened to murder my family if she ever came forward about what he was doing. The CAC gave Cadence a safe place to say exactly what had happened to her without the fear of being harmed. She was able to speak with a trained professional who made her feel comfortable, so comfortable that she would sub consciously mimic what he had done to her with her hands. As an 11 year old, she lacked the proper verbiage to fully explain what she was mimicking. The video gave context to where there would be none. These are children, they're scared, vulnerable and have been through enough without being put through unnecessary questioning when you already have the answers. As thankful as I am for this court, it took 2 years for our case to be heard. Can you imagine going 2 years and then having to get up on the stand in front of your parents, grandparents and strangers having to tell them about the worst days of your life? Let alone having to look your abuser in the eye, knowing he's threatened murder and challenge that threat? Cadence and I strongly believe that her not having to testify to what happened and using the CAC video saved her mental health. The days leading up to the trial her suicidal thoughts ravaged her, she couldn't sleep over the worry of seeing her abuser and she found it difficult to focus on school. She feels shame, self loathing and despair about what had happened to her, why add more of those feelings, making her and other children relive something so awful? My hope is that going forward these children, who have been through the same horrific events as my child are afforded that same opportunity. Thank you for allowing hearing me today.