

I'm going to read a prepared statement about my experience. I may pause as needed. Before reporting what happened, I expected the adults in school leadership to do the right thing. I didn't even question whether I would be understood, supported, and kept safe. I expected that we would be kept separated, and I expected more empathy from the adults involved. I trusted that the school would make the right decisions and have a clear protocol for how situations like this should be handled. That wasn't what I experienced.

My first interview was with the school principal. I went to that meeting believing I was going to be heard and supported. My aunt had offered to come with me, and looking back, I wish I had said yes. I was told the meeting would include the principal and the school counselor, and that the counselor would be there to help me. The first question I was asked was, "What did you expect was going to happen?" When the next question came — "Where did the assault happen?" — I immediately noticed that the school principal's tone felt cold. She did not make eye contact with me and was typing on her computer while I spoke. I remember feeling like I was an inconvenience rather than someone asking for help.

The only interaction I had with a police officer was over the phone. He had me read my statement. My parents were with me during that call, and I felt safe.

The second interview was with the dorm principal and the school principal. They asked many of the same questions I had already been asked by the child advocate. The dorm principal asked where it happened and how it happened, and I had to describe it again. During that interview, I remember feeling extremely dizzy and overwhelmed. I felt like I might pass out while being asked to repeat details of what had happened. During that meeting, the school principal sat eating candy and did not ask any questions.

At one point, the dorm principal flipped through his notes and asked me if I had told the perpetrator to "shut the fuck up" on Snapchat, based on something the perpetrator had said. What happened was that the perpetrator sent me a "streak," which is a message sent to many people to keep a snap count going.

At the end of that meeting, the dorm principal asked me who I had told about the assault and told me not to talk about it with anyone except my therapist and my boyfriend. During that meeting, I felt scared. His tone was cold, and the way he looked at me made me feel like I had done something wrong.

Right after that second interview, I was brought into a meeting with the school principal, the dorm principal, and my parents. My dad was visibly upset, and my mom was crying. The atmosphere in the room was very tense. My dad asked what their next steps were and said that I had already been interviewed enough times. He expressed frustration that my mom had been asked what she would do if the accused student were her son, and said that if it had been his son, he would have brought him in and held him accountable. Hearing that exchange and feeling the tension in the room caused me to start crying, and my mom said that I could leave the meeting.

The third time I was questioned was again with the dorm principal. He asked me to clarify a statement I had made, specifically asking what I meant when I said that he "put my bottom on his areas and kept turning me toward him." He wanted me to describe exactly what parts of my body I was referring to. Being asked those graphic questions made me feel sick. Having to talk about my body parts in that way, to him, felt inappropriate and deeply uncomfortable.

After it was reported, seeing him for the first time at school was shocking. I felt scared, and I also felt angry because it seemed like the school had not acted yet. In that moment, I decided for myself. I knew I was not going to change schools because of what happened to me. Making that choice made me feel empowered.

At the same time, I was still afraid. I hid in the bathrooms during passing periods. I avoided the cafeteria and the gym. I started to not want to go to cheer practice because that was when he would be practicing too. I always felt like I needed someone with me to feel safe.

The assault also affected me by making me afraid to be in public, especially because I worried about running into the school principal or the dorm principal. When that fear comes up, I relive the assault and become flooded with emotions. It can make me feel dizzy and overwhelmed.

What's been hardest for me is realizing that laws and rights sometimes exist only on paper. As a teenager, you're taught that if something bad happens, there are systems meant to protect you. You're told there are clear rules, clear processes, and people who will step in when something goes wrong.

But when I tried to rely on those systems, I saw how easily those clear rules were treated like suggestions instead of obligations.

When I was 16, I was made to feel like my concerns were emotional or exaggerated rather than legitimate. What I was asking for wasn't special treatment — it was basic accountability and adherence to the law.

What's happened since then, especially around access to records, has reinforced that realization. The laws around public records and victim rights are very clear, but they weren't followed consistently. That raises a bigger question: if adults in positions of authority don't treat these laws as binding, what are young people supposed to believe?

It's unsettling to wonder if this is what my generation is being conditioned to accept — that those systems exist but only work if the people in power choose to respect them.

This isn't about revenge or targeting individuals. It's about recognizing a pattern of systemic failure, where accountability is missing and where young people learn very quickly that speaking up doesn't always lead to protection.

If the systems meant to protect minors and victims don't function as written, then the problem isn't with the people who come forward — it's with the systems themselves.

When asked what changes I would like to see, I would like Title IX to be taken seriously and followed through with a clear, step-by-step protocol. Those protections exist because survivors before me fought for that civil right. It's a right I should have had, and having it properly applied could have lessened the emotional impact that I will carry with me for the rest of my life.

That is my experience, and that is all I want to share today.