

## M.S. Victim Impact Statement

First, I want to thank the judge for taking the time to listen to my story, and to all of the people along my journey who have listened with an open heart and with such compassion. It moves me beyond belief, and you know who you are.

When I was in middle school, I dreamed of going to Phillips Exeter Academy. I would spend countless hours on the school's webpage, reading stories of a student's day-in-the-life, and wishing that that could one day be me. The day that I got in, I jumped and ran around the house. I was ecstatic, elated beyond belief. Everything that I had been working towards as a child, the long hours spent practicing piano, the extra after-school Kumon homework to make me competitive in class, had all become worth it. I remember my parents and teachers in middle school telling me what an honor and a privilege it was to be admitted to Exeter, and as a 13-year-old, I believed it whole-heartedly. What reason could we have to assume otherwise?

From the first week I arrived in New Hampshire, everything changed. My world spun around me as I realized my new reality: long headache-filled nights of churning over challenging problem sets, seemingly endless history readings, and constantly shifting expectations. On top of it all, I was also facing the realization that I would not be able to juggle my piano practice schedule with the academic workload. I recall in vivid detail collapsing into tears on the Academy lawn my first week there, calling my parents and crying afraid that I would lose my identity as a musician.

In a world full of strangers and adults that I didn't know if I could trust, one person stood out above all: my math teacher my first term freshman year, Mr. Kaminski. Mr. Kaminski's math class was always the highlight of my school day. I would bound down the hallway, eager to step into his classroom, where I would always be met with an enthusiastic and kind smile. There was no pretense with him. He was so real, and his enthusiasm for math and his love of teaching felt so genuine that you couldn't help but smile when he did. I was always eager to begin my math homework and to do it perfectly to impress Mr. Kaminski. He was just that kind of charismatic teacher who, through his love of what he does, makes you want to love it too.

I had Mr. Kaminski as my math teacher for my fall and winter terms freshman year, and he was often my bright light in the darkness of the long, bitterly cold New England winter. I knew he could tell that I was struggling: struggling to adjust, struggling to succeed, struggling to adapt to all of the expectations that seemed to keep shifting around me. He always met me with compassion and an open ear. I saw in him a true ally, a genuine friend and mentor, someone I could always go to and confide in when things became difficult for me.

My spring semester freshman year, I transitioned to a new math teacher, a visiting teacher here for one year to observe and learn the "Harkness" method. I, along with many of the other students in my class, found it difficult to adjust to her new method of teaching. After a few weeks of isolated struggling, I stopped by Mr. Kaminski's classroom and waited for him to finish teaching. I loved watching him teach. He was so smart, and I looked up to him more than anyone at Exeter.

After he was done, I told him that I was having trouble with my new math teacher. He immediately assuaged my fears, comforted me, told me it would all be fine, and gave me a big hug. I'll never forget the smell of those fuzzy blue Patagonia jackets he would wear as I buried my face in them deep in a hug. He began helping me with my homework multiple times a week that semester.

By this time, Mr. Kaminski was my go-to person on campus. After our tutoring sessions, I would tell him all about my day, my worries, upcoming projects that I was scared I wouldn't be able to do justice. He was always there for me, without judgment. I couldn't believe that someone could be so kind for no other reason at all.

He would often send me scanned images of sheets of paper where he would write down new math problems for me to try and solve, or often-times, solutions to questions that made no sense to me. My freshman year, I felt like I was trapped deep in a mystical cave of wonders full of things that I couldn't understand or I didn't have access to, and I had found my genie in the lamp. He was my resource, my closest confidante, the ammunition in my camp.

When hearts drawn in red marker began showing up on those scanned sheets of paper, I didn't think twice about it. Of course there was love and affection there. He filled the spot where my parents couldn't be. When my dad couldn't be there to give me bear hugs and encourage me to "Keep going, kiddo!", Mr. Kaminski was there to fill that void with hugs and reassurance. Where my mom couldn't be there to make me my favorite foods and help me with my homework, Mr. Kaminski was there to bring me snacks and tutor me. That year on Valentine's Day, he gave me a grapefruit that had a red heart drawn on it. My heart swelled. "For your energy and nourishment!", he said.

Mr. Kaminski, I still remember the taste of the wine on your tongue as it trespassed my mouth, the cold stiff hardwood floor that froze beneath my bare feet, the dark corner of the room in your house that you swept me away into to hide me like a secret. "Careful," you whispered. "They'll see us!" as if I was a willing and complicit outlaw on the run. I was frozen stiff, from the cold and from the fear. I was only 14, a young teenager, and I hadn't the slightest clue what to do. I had never kissed a boy before, nor had one ever touched me. My first kiss was the first thing you took from me.

Over time, a kiss escalated to you revealing your penis to me, penetrating me with your fingers, fellatio, cunnilingus, and intercourse, multiple times a week. I couldn't explain to myself why I allowed this to continue. Years later, when I sought counseling in Florida, my counselor told me that my reaction was normal. My brain could not process what was happening to me, and I convinced myself that what was happening to me was "normal" to avoid the pain.

People have asked me why I didn't tell anyone back then. There are many reasons. At the time, I hadn't registered at all that I was being abused. Here was a man that was kind, smart, and trustworthy. I just couldn't believe that someone like him could do something so awful. This couldn't be sexual abuse. He had always helped me. To face the notion that he, my closest friend and support, was betraying my trust and my innocence in the most intimate and hurtful of ways is something that I at 14, 15, 16, and even into my early 20s could not bear to confront.

Trying to focus during that time was extremely difficult, and when I think back to my time at Exeter, what is most pronounced to me is the feeling of being overwhelmed, isolated, and helpless. By the winter of my junior year, I was reeling from the ramifications of my abuse. I isolated myself from those around me, and I always kept my head down. I became curt, impolite, and closed off to the world. I stopped eating and nourishing myself. I wouldn't shower or take care of myself for days. I stopped attending class and stopped doing my homework. My dorm room became a pigsty, folders and papers scattered across the desk and floor, a huge pile of dirty clothes on my bed, and everything in disarray around me. My environment mirrored how I felt on the inside, a worthless, ugly, meaningless complete and utter mess. I began having testing and performance anxiety. I began choking during piano performances of pieces that I had practiced for hours and knew by heart, and I began breaking down into tears during my exams. I would look around the table at all the other students as I started shaking and pulling at my hair in frustration. I would think to

myself, “No one else at this table is behaving like you. They’re all competent, mature students who belong here. You’re a dumb, lazy, incompetent, unkind walking emotional breakdown, and you disgust me.”

Mr. Kaminski, the most difficult part for me to remember now is how I blamed myself for the anxiety and depression I experienced. I thought that there must be something wrong with *\*me\**, that it was my own poor lack of social skills, my own fault for not being a good student, my own problem of not being well-enough liked. It never crossed my mind that you were to blame for all of the pain I was experiencing. That’s how manipulated I was by you. Even as I was deep in this fog of depression, I still thought you were trying to help me. You would stop by my room and drop off my favorite snacks, still try and cheer me up with my favorite songs. I pushed away everyone in my life. I blamed myself for destroying everything good around me. It took years of self-loathing and shame before I sought help and realized that my pain and suffering was because of your actions. Look at this idiotic mess of a fool that you made me. I wasn’t like this before.

I was open to anything and everything you suggested. You knew this. You saw the adoration and trust in my eyes every time I looked at you, and you violated that love and that trust. You used up every last ounce of my innocence, and you manipulated not just my body but also my mind. You didn’t prey on just anyone. You preyed on the one person who trusted you more than anyone else in this world. To me, that is the most predatory and cruel kind of violation.

So many questions cross through my mind. Did you think that this girl you were touching would never grow up one day to have a voice? Did you ever stop to think that perhaps *you* were the reason for my sleepless nights in high school? Was it not enough for you to take my love, my trust, and my innocence? Did you have to take my body as well? I wish I could’ve reached out and had someone tell me everything would be okay, but that is a result of your actions.

I would like to share the words of the incredible Chanel Miller, a fellow survivor of sexual abuse, who captures what I wish to convey so perfectly: “If you think I was spared, came out unscathed, that today I ride off into the sunset while you suffer the greatest blow, you are mistaken. Nobody wins. We have all been devastated, we have all been trying to find some meaning in all of this suffering. Your damage was concrete; stripped of titles [and employment]. My damage was internal, unseen. I carry it with me. You took away my worth, my privacy, my energy, my time, my safety, my intimacy, my confidence, my own voice, until today.”

No one will ever know the full impact my sexual abuse has had on me and my whole life. The sexual abuse I experienced has changed my life in a way that no single human should be given the power to do so. For years ahead, I will be scarred and never healed.

To see me, you would never begin to think of what I have endured. On the outside I portray a sunny, self-assured demeanor, and you would never begin to question that what lies beneath isn’t also that way. A person who has never grappled with sexual abuse cannot begin to understand the weight bearing on you each and every day. I’ve had to get by knowing that there will always be an ocean’s depth worth of worries, troubles, and hardships that I cannot share but that I am expected to hold.

Mr. Kaminski, all I can do now is try and take my life back. I can’t get back those years of mental suffering, nor can I ever get back the girl that I once was. But, I can try to find it in my heart to forgive you, and forever relinquish the control that you have had on me and my life. I have heard it said that forgiveness is taking the knife out of your own back and not using it to hurt anyone else, no matter how they may have hurt you. This is the spirit I hope to lead with for the rest of my life.

Thank you, judge, for listening, and thank you for your time.