

Cadre Of Elected Officials Gather For Signing Of Senate Bill 445, 'Burt's Law'

By Administrator
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RALEIGH, (SGRToday.com) - It is named after a developmentally disabled young man who endured sexual abuse at a Conover group home, and now 'Burt's Law,' Senate Bill 445, is the law of North Carolina. On Tuesday, Gov. Pat McCrory signed the bill into law, requiring anyone who knows about or sees abuse to report it to authorities within 24 hours.

Burt Powell and his parents were on hand for the signing and were given one of the first pens the governor used to apply his signature.

Lt. Gov. Dan Forest and several state legislators also were on hand, as was the mayor Conover, the town where the abuse occurred. Burt Powell's abuser has since died.

"It is our responsibility to protect those who cannot defend themselves," the governor said at the signing. "What happened to Burt is heartbreaking, but because of his bravery, Burt's Law will work to ensure the safety of group home residents in the future."

The offender threatened to hurt victims' families if the abuse was reported, according to the governor.

Burt's Law requires any person, either staff member or volunteer, who witnesses a group home resident being sexually assaulted to report the offense to the local Department of Social Services, law enforcement and the District Attorney. Failure to do so within 24 hours will result in a Class A1 misdemeanor.

There are also increased consequences for those who intentionally injure an adult with special needs in a facility.