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Proponent Testimony on House Bill 359
Ohio House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee
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Chairman Brown, Vice Chairman Blessing, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee:

As Secretary of State, I have been committed to making it easier to vote and harder to cheat for all Ohioans. With the help of members of this legislature we have made great strides in this effort, but our work is not done. There are those among us who, despite all that has been done to ensure an open process, still do not participate. This is not due to a lack of access, but rather out of fear for their lives. The individuals I am here to advocate for are the victims of domestic abuse and human trafficking.

House Bill 359, jointly-sponsored by Representatives Duffey and Gonzales, allows victims of domestic violence, stalking, human trafficking, rape, and sexual battery to keep their addresses confidential. Currently, 38 states offer an address confidentiality program. It is time Ohio joins them.

Under House Bill 359, victims of domestic violence, human trafficking and other crimes are able to work with an application assistant to apply for a confidential address, separate from their residential address, which they may provide to government agencies in order to prevent their place of residence from becoming a public record. This separate address will be housed at the Secretary of State's office, and upon receipt, the office will redirect the victims' mail to their actual residential addresses on a daily basis. The program, including the cost of mailing the victims' mail, is funded through monetary fines levied against the perpetrators of domestic violence and other crimes. Courts will have discretion to issue fines ranging from \$70 to \$500.

In addition to setting up a separate address at the Secretary of State's office, victims will be able to register to vote with their individual boards of elections and ensure that their addresses remain confidential. This is accomplished through the use of a unique identification number that is assigned by the Secretary of State's office to each victim enrolled in the address confidentiality program.

During my time as Ohio's Secretary of State, I have heard stories from boards of elections and victims' advocates about women who have been afraid to register to vote because Ohio law

currently does not allow the Secretary of State's office or boards of elections to keep victims' addresses confidential. House Bill 359 would finally allow these women to register to vote and vote without being fearful that their addresses will be compromised.

I want to take a moment and thank Speaker Rosenberger and his leadership team for ensuring this important legislation receives the consideration it deserves. I also extend my thanks to Representatives Duffey and Gonzales, and to you, Mr. Chairman, for your leadership on this important measure. Finally, I would like to thank Senators Lehner and Williams for their work on the companion bill in their chamber, Senate Bill 222.

I urge support for House Bill 359 so victims can come out of the shadows, fully exercise their rights as citizens and participate in the electoral process without fear.