



**Proponent Testimony**  
**HB 359 – Address Confidentiality**  
**Ohio House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee**

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Chair Brown, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Clyde and members of the Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, thank you for this opportunity to testify in support of HB 359. As Ohio's statewide coalition, the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence advocates for comprehensive responses and rape crisis services for survivors and empowers communities to prevent sexual violence.

Victims of rape, domestic violence, stalking and human trafficking face many barriers to accessing safety. Advocates at rape crisis centers, domestic violence programs and other victim service agencies assist victims daily in developing safety plans and helping victims rebuild their lives after they have been victimized and often face continued stalking and harassment from the abuser.

According to U.S. Bureau of Justice Statistics, 7.5 million people are stalked in the U.S. each year and 46% of those victims are stalked once per week. Additional national research has demonstrated that many stalkers pursue their victims daily, either in person or through the use of technology. Having access to a victim's address would only encourage this dangerous behavior. Victims of stalking face increasingly high incidents of anxiety, depression and insomnia – all of which are exacerbated when the victim's personal property is destroyed.

Often the general public assumes that once someone has left an abusive environment or the victimization has ended, that a victim of crime can readily move about and easily move forward in their daily routine; but this is not the case for most victims. As Nancy Neylon shared in her testimony from the Ohio Domestic Violence Network, "a confidential address can be a critical component of safety planning for victims who fear further violence or even lethal retaliation from their abuser."

If the abuser is someone well-known and well-liked in the community, supporters or fans of the abuser have been known to protest outside the survivor's home, commit vandalism, or otherwise intimidate or harass the survivor, thereby limiting the survivor's mobility and safety.

Two victims who provided testimony over the last year on untested rape kits also shared with OAESV that they were concerned about confidentiality and safety, even after more than 20 years after the rape in one case. We applaud the General Assembly for passing legislation in 2014 which now requires that rape kits – past and present – are submitted for testing quickly, and not left to sit on shelves gathering dust; and we also applaud the extension of the statute of limitations for rape and sexual battery, so that victims of these crimes have a longer time period to access justice. It's important to note, however, that many cases had already expired before this legislation passed, which means that those perpetrators will not be brought to justice. One survivor shared her concerns that now her perpetrator (who will not see their day in court or face consequences in the criminal justice system because the statute of limitation already expired) knows where she lives and that this has brought up safety concerns for she and her family.

Lastly, in-person harassment and intimidation are not the only concerns when the public has access to a survivor's address. There are people who wish to intimidate survivors of sexual assault or exploit their situation via the anonymity of postal mail. Someone can reach a survivor through the mail without having to identify themselves, which further exacerbates the trauma and makes it less likely that the survivor would be willing to see the justice process through.

Thirty-eight states in the U.S. have an address confidentiality program. HB 359 is a great step for Ohio victims to rebuild their lives and have the opportunity to vote, without the fear of their perpetrator finding them and further causing fear and harm. By keeping a victim's address confidential and not part of the public record for victims who are eligible and enroll in this program, Ohio is increasing safety for victims of these crimes.

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of HB 359, and I am available for any questions from committee members at [khanna@oaesv.org](mailto:khanna@oaesv.org) or 216-658-1381 ext. 125.