

Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee
May 23, 2017
House Bill 63 – Proponent Testimony

My name is Phyllis Carlson-Riehm and I represent ACTION OHIO Coalition For Battered Women, a statewide domestic violence coalition. My testimony is in support of House Bill 63, known as Judy's Bill, sponsored by Representative Jim Hughes. The bill is named for Judy Malinowski, a domestic violence victim, whose story of abuse received significant media attention in Columbus.

House Bill 63 requires an additional prison term of 5 to 20 years if an offender is convicted of felonious assault and a specification that the victim suffered a permanent, serious disfigurement or substantial incapacity, or that the offender used an accelerant.

In its role as a statewide coalition, ACTION OHIO provides resources and referrals for domestic violence victims, their family members, friends and co-workers. We also focus on creating training opportunities for professionals who serve victims and their children – especially those in the medical field, because many seriously injured victims visit emergency rooms every year. In fact, a high percentage of victims who visit ER's with more serious injuries are likely to become homicide victims.

The U.S. Department of Health and Human Services reported that more than 1 million women seek ER or hospital treatment for serious injuries caused by battering each year. Because of the general physical strength differences between men and women, women are six to seven times more likely to receive serious physical injuries than are men.

Also, research indicates that a victim's face, head and upper body are more apt to receive the most serious injuries when the abuser is becoming more lethal. Typically abusers avoid causing injuries that are visible to outsiders when the victim is in the workplace or on shopping errands, for instance. But once his rage escalates, he cares less about that and is more intent on inflicting harm which will be evident to the victim with every glance in a mirror or every time the children look at their mother's face. Often those evident physical injuries will prevent her from going to work, going out in public anywhere, or even visiting family or friends - especially if she's been keeping the abuse from them. The end result is that the abuser gains greater control of the victim and has more opportunities to threaten her life as well as end it.

ACTION OHIO's work to educate medical professionals is directly related to the connections between ER visits, hospitalization, serious injury and the likelihood of future homicide.

We applaud Representative Hughes for responding to the tragic story of Judy Malinowski, whose boyfriend viciously attacked her with an accelerant, causing her to experience horrific pain, on-going hospitalization, endless medical procedures to save her

life and a prognosis which continues to be bleak at best. Judy didn't deserve what happened to her and didn't cause it. Even with the enactment of Judy's Bill, her abuser will never experience what she has been enduring, but at least Ohio law will provide a more appropriate criminal penalty option for abusers like Michael W. Slager.

I am glad that committee members are poised to vote the bill out of the Criminal Justice Committee. Members of the domestic violence community will welcome its eventual passage and enactment into Ohio law. Thanks for the opportunity to present proponent testimony.

Phyllis L Carlson-Riehm, Executive Director
ACTION OHIO Coalition For Battered Women
PO Box 423, Worthington OH 43085
614 825-0551 / actionohio@wowway.biz