

Chairman Manning, Vice-Chair Rezabek, Ranking Member Celebrezze, and members of the Criminal Justice Committee, good afternoon and thank you for allowing me the opportunity to speak today. My name is Claudette Ross and my family has personally been affected by the dangers of social media, and sexting.

I believe every county in the State of Ohio, should have some sort of diversion program. If some of the smaller more rural counties are unable or don't have the resources available, they should be able to partner with a neighboring county for this program.

This bill allows for children who have never been educated to the actual dangers of sexting and its consequences, and who are first time offenders to enter a diversion program instead of prosecution. There are also instances where diversion would not be offered depending on the severity of the actions. Kids make mistakes just like we as adults do, but one mistake should not label them for the foreseeable future.

I believe that we as parents should also be held accountable, and if your child is offered diversion, one parent or guardian must attend with them. If the child and parent do not attend, they are no longer eligible for the program and will be charged. A program loosely based on the truancy problem should hold parents more accountable, because ultimately they are the owners of the phone.

Children in the diversion program should also lose their phone privileges for at least 6 months. Being a parent, I understand that this would be difficult, inconvenient and more, but we have to hold them accountable for their actions.

All of that being said, I feel that Education is the key to helping kids today, understand just how dangerous all of this can be. I work in a rural county middle school, and I see these issues daily, and being a kid just keeps getting harder and harder in today's society. Social media platforms evolve daily, and unfortunately our laws are not evolving with them.

Parents and kids need to be equipped with all of the facts and the severity of these actions. Unfortunately, children are being exposed to very real and scary situations at a much younger age than in the past. Law makers, law enforcement, and teachers need to work together in assemblies and in health classes, teaching kids the dangers of these actions, and the very real consequences that come with them.

Unfortunately, my family has been devastated by the realization of how dangerous, sexting and social media can be. Had Camden and I been more educated on the diversion program available, we would have been able to process the situation better, and maybe he would have been here today talking to you with me.

Thank you for your time.