

Honorable Mike Duffey
Chair, House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee
77 S. High St
Columbus, OH 43215

Chair Duffey, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee,

I come before you today to express my support for House Bill 240, also known as the “Respect Your Date Act.” This bill will help reduce the amount of incidents of sexual violence across Ohio’s universities through a variety of avenues.

Sexual assault, rape, stalking, dating violence, and domestic violence occur within the United States at a staggering rate, affecting millions of men and women. These acts are traumatic experiences for the victim and are difficult to recover from. Often times, the victim’s privacy has been taken away from them. They feel as if their dignity has been robbed. This is truly an emergency that we face as a country.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention’s (CDC) National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 9 men were victims of sexual violence, physical violence, or stalking by an intimate partner. 1 in 3 women and 1 in 6 men have experienced “contact” sexual violence. Even more staggering is that nearly 23 million women and 1.7 million men have been victims of rape or attempted rape in their lifetime. 8.5 million women and 1.5 million men first experienced rape before the age of 18. 4.5 million men and women were stalked before turning 18.

Additionally, according to the same survey, 1 in 4 women and 1 in 7 men have experienced severe physical violence from an intimate partner. As a result of this intimate partner violence, victims reported feeling fearful, having concern for their safety, and exhibiting signs of post-traumatic stress disorder¹.

The situation does not improve at college campuses. According to RAINN, 11.2% of college students will be a victim of rape or sexual assault and only 20% of female victims report it².

¹ National Intimate Partner and Sexual Violence Survey, the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention. <https://www.cdc.gov/violenceprevention/nisvs/summaryreports.html>

² Campus Sexual Violence: Statistics, Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network. <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/campus-sexual-violence>

If enacted, House Bill 240 will benefit the students of Ohio and will move us in the right direction in curbing sexual violence at institutions of higher learning. The first provision requires institutions of higher education to enact policies that will outline the process for reporting the act and consequences. Also, institutions will be required to keep records of all reports and incidents. This measure will be beneficial, as it will ensure that a university can take clear and defined action against a student that violated adopted policies.

Furthermore, institutions will be required to educate students on the policy regarding sexual violence.

For education and prevention, Wright State University is exploring avenues for a required online course for incoming students. The current idea is to mandate this in a manner that would require completion of the course prior to class registration. This course teaches the signs of sexual violence and abuse, how to be an active bystander, and the services available to students that are affected by this. Students will know where to report such incidents through this educational course. Currently, many students may not be fully aware of the ways to report and seek help from on campus services.

The New England Journal of Medicine published an article titled the “Efficacy of a Sexual Assault Resistance Program for University Women.” This scholarly study consisted of two groups, a resistance group (received education on sexual violence through the Enhanced Assess, Acknowledge, Act Sexual Assault Resistance program) and a control group. The study found that women who participated in the educational courses had a lower risk of completed rape compared to the control group (5.2% versus 9.8%). The resistance group also experienced a lower risk of attempted rape (3.4% versus 9.3%)³.

The reality is that we could see real progress on this urgent matter if universities effectively educated students on sexual violence.

In Ohio, we have the chance to help reduce this epidemic that our fellow Americans face every day. This bill will move us in the right direction to preventing sexual violence at institutions of higher learning in Ohio. I would be happy to take questions at this time.

³ Efficacy of a Sexual Assault Resistance Program for University Women (June 11, 2015), The New England Journal of Medicine.
<http://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJMsa1411131#t=abstract>