

Honorable Mike Duffey  
Chair, House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee  
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Columbus, OH 43215

Chair Duffey, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Sweeney and members of the House Higher Education and Workforce Development Committee, I am grateful to have been granted the honor of coming before you this morning to express personal support for the Respect Your Date Bill. It is my understanding that you are already familiar with parts of my story, but I would like to tell it in my own words so that you might firmly grasp why this new piece of legislation is necessary not only for me, but for every single current and future college student in Ohio.

Two years ago on Welcome Weekend of my Junior Year at the University of Cincinnati, I attended an off-campus house party as a normal college student, having not the slightest idea that it would be the last time I would ever know how normal feels. I do not know how much alcohol I consumed or if there had been something slipped into my drink. A twelve-hour time gap is missing from my memory of that night. But what I do now for sure is that I left that house party on my own and was followed by another UC student from the party who had been a stranger until that point. He assured everyone that he was doing so under the pretense of walking me home safely, but he did not walk me home. Instead he led me, stumbling and blacked-out, back to his apartment, raped me, and sent me off to find my own way home.

Little did I know, the most painful days were still ahead of me as I made the rare, difficult, and courageous decision to report my rape to both the UC Police Department and Title IX, a building on campus that I didn't even know existed until one of my friends reached out to someone in our Student Government and asked what kind of options I had. I cooperated and did everything that was expected of me. I recounted the most private and excruciating details of my life to complete strangers over and over again with the desperate hope that I could simultaneously achieve justice for myself and protect other UC students from a predator. I was assured by the Title IX coordinator and the detective who investigated my case that there would be no repercussions against me for moving forward. And when the detective concluded his investigation, I was firmly promised that UC would interim suspend my rapist pending a university hearing so that I could attend classes without the crippling fear of running into him. That did not happen. Weeks passed, and the Title IX office and the UCPD expressed confusion that nothing about my case was going according to procedure, while the UC administration refused to

communicate with me. At my most vulnerable point, my mom and I arranged a meeting with a Student Affairs administrator where I begged through helpless sobs for them to suspend my rapist so that I could feel even a minute sense of security. The response I was given was deceitful disguised as sincerity: Essentially, the only way they could help me was to get a criminal indictment, and if I didn't feel safe walking on campus until then, I could stay home.

I can't say for certain, but I suspect UC didn't have confidence that a Grand Jury would indict my rapist, and that would have been a convenient way to place the blame and responsibility on someone else. But I testified in front of twelve complete strangers a few weeks later and emerged with that indictment and an arrest warrant. It took several days and multiple emails to the administration and UC's president to finally get the interim suspension I so desperately needed. By this time, the semester was nearly half way over, and I was told by the Title IX coordinator that the plan was to hold the hearing to determine Tyler's guilt by the end of the semester in December.

In November of 2015, I filed a complaint with the Department of Education on the grounds that UC had refused me my Title IX rights and thus created a hostile learning environment. The Department of Education considered my complaint and determined that there was enough to open a federal investigation of how UC handles sexual assaults on campus.

Finally, a few months later in March, a hearing was held on campus with a panel of unbiased students and UC staff. I was given the option of participating via conference call if I couldn't handle seeing my rapist, but it was important for me to face him and name him for what he is. It was also the first time I'd seen him since the night he'd taken everything from me. Enduring that hearing is still one of the most challenging things I've ever done. The two weeks of waiting for a verdict were filled with pain, flashbacks, anxiety, and fear that I wouldn't get justice. But in early April, during a Group Therapy session with other UC Survivors, I received an email with the results. They watched me completely break down in tears as I read to them aloud in heartbreaking victory that my rapist had been found guilty of Sexual Misconduct and was to be expelled. UC had done the right thing, but I do not think it was for the right reasons because I was not the only Survivor in that room whose case had been mishandled by the university.

As victims, society pressures us to report our sexual assaults so that the justice gives them the validation that we really were assaulted, and they hold us personally responsible for repeat offenders. Society has a lot to say about what we could have done to avoid being raped but is silent when it comes

to teaching men not to rape. Society wonders why so few victims report, but if you put yourself in my shoes for just one moment, you would know why. I am the posterchild for systems that fail victims of sexual violence, and it is rare to find a victim willing to endure endlessly reliving arguably the worst and most humiliating pain in the world to complete strangers who will dissect her entire life to determine if they believe her. But when one is strong enough to come forward, we don't know where to go because universities fail to advertise how to report to Title IX and don't have consistent enough guidelines to put faith in. They see us as liabilities rather than human beings who have been violated. UC did not do right by me, but if I can spare one life from enduring what I endured and feeling what I still feel every day, then this will all be worth it.

Thank you.

Jennifer Schoewe