



**Representative Emilia Strong Sykes**  
**34<sup>th</sup> Ohio House District**

Chairwoman Anielski, Vice-Chairman Hambley, Ranking Member Bishoff and fellow members of the State and Local Government Committee, thank you for the opportunity to present my sponsor testimony on House Bill 94.

HB 94 would establish February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month. Awareness months are important of course to raise awareness, but in this particular bill, it is important because safe relationships for youth are created when communities work together to eliminate violence, while educating our youth on signs of harmful relationships. Allocating a month for such a cause will allow sufficient exposure, coordinated awareness-raising campaigns, and a repetitive designated time every year to address, and remember the issue.

**Committees:**

Finance Committee  
Finance Subcommittee on Health & Human Services  
Civil Justice  
Ways & Means  
Joint Medicaid Oversight Committee

**[www.ohiohouse.gov](http://www.ohiohouse.gov)**  
**77 S. High Street**  
**Columbus, Ohio 43215-6111**

**Contact Information:**

Office: 614-466-3100  
Toll-Free: 1-800-282-0253  
Fax: 614-719-6968  
Email: [Rep34@ohiohouse.gov](mailto:Rep34@ohiohouse.gov)

Teen dating violence is defined as the physical, sexual, psychological, or emotional violence within a dating relationship, including stalking. It can occur in person, electronically, and might occur between a current or former dating partner.

According to the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention, Approximately one in three adolescents in the United States is a victim of physical, sexual, emotional, or verbal abuse from a dating partner.<sup>1</sup> With one in five female high school students reporting physical and/or sexual abuse by a dating partner, we can all agree that teen dating violence is a substantial problem in Ohio and we must address the issue head-on.<sup>2</sup> When left unchecked, dating violence among adolescents escalates, and leads to dating violence among young adults, perpetuating the cycle of violence for a lifetime.

Violent behavior often begins between the ages of twelve and eighteen, and the severity of violence among intimate partners has been shown to increase if the abuse pattern was established in adolescence.

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<sup>1</sup> <http://www.loveisrespect.org/resources/dating-violence-statistics/>

<sup>2</sup> [http://www.americanbar.org/groups/domestic\\_violence/resources/statistics.html](http://www.americanbar.org/groups/domestic_violence/resources/statistics.html)

This violence can often prove fatal: 20 percent of girls killed between ages 16 and 19 were killed by their significant other. However, girls are not the only victims of teenage dating violence. In fact, teenage boys are just as likely as girls to report being assaulted by a dating partner. Individuals in low-income households are also most likely to be victims of dating violence.

While there aren't enough days to properly express the sincerity of this issue, I believe that 29 days dedicated to teen dating violence can be a great start.

I am hopeful that this committee will join Representative Perales and I in recognizing the Month of February as Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month in order to raise concern on an issue that affects more young people than most realize are victims.

Thank you again for this opportunity to testify on House Bill 94, I will be happy to take questions upon the conclusion of Rep. Perales testimony.