

Ohio House of Representatives  
State & Local Government Committee  
March 21, 2017  
Proponent Testimony – House Bill 94

My name is Phyllis Carlson-Riehm and I represent ACTION OHIO Coalition For Battered Women, a statewide domestic violence coalition.

Our work includes 1) Responding to individual victims of violence seeking advocacy, referrals and resources, 2) Providing training opportunities for professionals serving victims and their children, and 3) Educating the public about various forms of violence that impact many families in our communities.

My testimony is in support of House Bill 94, which would designate February as “Teen Dating Violence Awareness Month” in Ohio.

Each year beginning in 2009, the U.S. Congress has passed a resolution to recognize February as “Teen Dating Violence Awareness & Prevention Month.” Therefore, it is very fitting that Ohio adopts its own legislation to focus attention on Teen Dating Violence during February.

With my testimony, I have provided a copy of the Dating Abuse and Teen Violence Fact Sheet, produced by the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence.

- 20.9% of female high school students & 13.4% of male high school students report being physically or sexually abused by a dating partner.
- **A 2014 study found 10% of teenage students in dating relationships were coerced into sexual intercourse in the previous year.**
- Another study found 26% of teens in relationships were victims of cyber dating abuse.
- **57% of teens know someone who has been physically, sexually or verbally abusive in a dating relationship.**
- **Only 33% of teenage dating abuse victims ever told anyone about it.**
- **50% of youth reporting dating violence & rape also reported attempting suicide.**

Teen dating violence is a real problem. It impacts many families in Ohio, even parents who believe that they know what’s going on with their kids and who have provided stable, loving homes for their children.

I believe that passage of House Bill 94 will build upon two previous legislative initiatives that were enacted:

- House Bill 19, known as the Tina Croucher Act, was passed in 2009. Tina was murdered by her boyfriend in 1992. Her parents led the effort for HB 19. This law requires schools to include Teen Dating Violence in Health Class curriculum and requires school personnel to receive instruction on the subject.

- House Bill 10, known as Shynerra's Law, was passed in 2010. Shynerra Grant was murdered by her boyfriend in 2005. Her parents led the effort for HB 10 (and two earlier bills that failed to be enacted). The law provides for Juvenile Protection Orders for teens experiencing abuse from a boyfriend or girlfriend they are dating.

Although House Bills 19 and 10 have made a difference by providing for education in schools and the option of obtaining protection orders for teen dating violence victims, there is need for more solutions in local school systems and communities.

- Health Classes may open the door for discussions about unhealthy teen dating relationships, but class time is limited. There are many other required topics in Health Class curriculum. Furthermore, many schools provide Health Classes in the last years of high school, after dating violence has already begun to occur.
- Students may be able to obtain a protection order, but many students may not even be aware of that option or how to begin the process. Furthermore, safety for the teen who has a protection order will depend on implementation of the order by the school and local law enforcement.

I believe that House Bill 94 can serve as another tool to increase awareness about Teen Dating Violence and the availability of Juvenile Protection Orders. House Bill 94 can also play a role in promoting Prevention Programs to focus on the difference between healthy and unhealthy teen dating relationships. **Preventing Teen Dating Violence before it starts is the best way to attack the problem. And HB 94 will help that effort.**

Thank you for the opportunity to share these viewpoints. I encourage your support for passage of House Bill 94.

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