

Howard Ice

Proponent Testimony

Senate Bill 67

My name is Howard Ice, I am Sierah's Uncle, and I was also her employer during the summer of 2016.

Sierah worked at my company, Ice Industries, as a Human Resources Intern. She had a goal of becoming a professional in the HR field, and with that goal she spent time learning at our plants in Toledo and Mason Ohio, and also in Grenada, Mississippi. Everyone she came in contact with, absolutely loved her. She was a natural when it came to putting people at ease, and she would have been a great success in her field.

It is surreal that I am actually sitting her today, talking to you about this, and asking you to help. I want you to know, that my expertise is in buying companies, making metal stampings, and leading my team. In no way do I profess to be an expert in these matters, and in law. But I do have insight into our despair and an opinion of what can be improved upon, and I want to thank you for letting me share.

As in manufacturing, some tools or resources aren't readily identified until you happen across a need for one. We happened across our need for a resource the night Sierah went missing, but it wasn't available.

In the moments after we realized Sierah was actually taken, around 1 AM that night, we had a million thoughts going through our heads.

Our first and foremost thought was : "From 1AM to 8AM, how can we help law enforcement with this effort, as friends and neighbors were gathering to help. Two distinct options as to what happened stood out:

1. She was taken and transported away (According to U.S. Federal Bureau of Information Crime Reports, in 2015 Ohio has ranked as high as fifth among all states in total reported human trafficking cases, with Toledo being identified as the fourth highest ranking city in the nation for recruiting victims into the illegal trade.) Obviously, this was a big concern right out of the gate.
2. She was abducted and being held, or she was already murdered, locally.

Not a great set of options to consider at 1AM in the morning, but knowing time was of the essence, and considering the first 24 hours of a disappearance can be the most meaningful and critical hours in hopes of achieving a positive outcome, we were all looking for ways to help law enforcement, prior to the Ohio Crime Unit, and the FBI showing up to engage.

The first thing our group did was look to access a history of violent offenders in a 10 mile radius of Sierah's abduction. Obviously, we, as civilians, didn't have access to any of that information, but, surely law enforcement would. So, we accessed the sexual offender registry, and found numerous potential places within our area, that might be suspect. We divided up those residences, split up, and everyone drove by each of those, listening, looking for anything that we could pass on to the Sheriffs. Obviously, that effort was not fruitful, but, it gave us a place to start, that registry identified potential risks.

When morning came, and we had setup our base camp at Sierah's grandparent's house, we asked law enforcement if they could access a data base for violent offenders in our area, anything that could help us identify possible threats to Sierah. We were told no such data base exists.

The information is out there, but it is in every courthouse across the State, listed as a case number, not by criminal. Unbelievably, even the FBI did not have access to this kind of centralized information.

Two exhaustive days of searching went by, and with every hour that passed, the hopes of finding Sierah alive diminished, and we all knew it.

On Thursday, one of the local Sheriff's remembered a strange, reclusive man, with a history of a criminal past, which prompted authorities into action. Thirty-Six hours after Sierah's disappearance, law enforcement found her alleged murderer, many hours too late.

I have obviously given this topic a lot of thought. In my spare time, I have researched the creation of registries, in Ohio and other states. And based on my personal experience with Sierah's abduction, I have formed my own opinions that I would like to share. First and foremost with any registry, I think one guiding principle should always be followed: Does a registry meet the fundamental responsibility of government, to help safe guard its citizens. I believe Sierah's Law does.

THE COMMUNITY

I believe there is a level of awareness, either wanting it or not, that exists in one's mind. A person can only handle so many problems, so much external pressures, so much daily stress, that at times, you have to choose your battles to mentally take on. With the most simplistic emotion of people, you truly want to believe your world, your space, is void of evil, void of worry, life is good.

Putting that statement in context of any registry, I think registries have inherent levels of participation.

Motivating you to look at a Registry:

1. Deep down, with life stress, do you look the other way, where you know about this information, but, chose to let it sit, or can you handle knowing who and what past is living around your corner. If the later, you engage the Registry.
2. You are impacted by a life changing, community event, that has motivated you to now KNOW THOSE AROUND YOU.
3. You are impacted directly, meaning you or your family, and you will forever engage in a registry and its knowledge.

With Sierah's Law, and looking at our community, I truly believe, that all three scenarios are now fully engaged to want this registry to exist.

LAW ENFORCEMENT

First of all I would like to comment on the law enforcement involved in Sierah's case. The Fulton County Sheriff, Roy Miller, and his entire team, along with the FBI, and the Ohio Bureau of Criminal Investigation, all handled this situation with the utmost professionalism; their efforts should not go unnoticed. Our entire family is thankful for their rapid involvement.

Quite simply, law enforcement should have every single tool available at its disposal when faced with extraordinary circumstances like this. The creation of Sierah's Law and the Violent Offender Registry, would help law enforcement identify, and gather information that could potentially expedite those crucial hours of a missing / abducted person. This Law would with no question, assist law enforcement in protecting and safe guarding the citizens of Ohio.

Finally, I would like to touch on convicted felon Re-entry Programs.

I respectfully do not believe this legislation to be in conflict with re-entry programs. In fact, re-entry programs can be successful in helping some convicted felons. But we also know that law enforcement and citizens are frustrated that there is not better public awareness that can result in faster response times to save lives and solve crimes. I believe our very first priority must be public safety.

Sierah's Law, is focusing on the most violent of offenders. Aggravated murder, murder, voluntary manslaughter, kidnapping, and abduction.

While there are only five other states that have successfully implemented a violent offender registry, I believe it is in imperative for our state government to pursue the successful passing and implementation of Sierah's Law for all Ohioans.

Thank You.

