

Good afternoon, Chairman Bacon, Vice-Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the committee. Thank you for inviting me to testify about House Bill 1. My name is Diona Clark, and I am the CEO of Liv Out Loud.

In the fall of 2004 I met my ex-boyfriend at a little league football game of my nephew. I was introduced to him through my brother in law who is his cousin. We both had inquired about one another that day and later exchanged numbers. I am from Dayton, Ohio and at that time I often travel to Columbus to seek employment however when I met my ex-boyfriend my visits switched from seeking employment to spending time with him. I had eventually made the decision to move to Columbus with him. My mother pleaded for me not to move in with my ex-boyfriend but I told her that she had her turn to raise me and that it was my turn to make my own decisions.

When I moved in with my ex-boyfriend I noticed that he consumed a lot of alcohol and being around him I started to pick up the habit. I also noticed that he would compare me to other women and even those that were video models. He quit his job because he felt that we weren't spending enough of time together and that left me to pay all the bills. He would often tell me that I would never amount to anything that nobody wanted me. This made me feel awfully low about myself. I remember we went to spend Thanksgiving with my family in Dayton and he said in front of my family that once he gets finished with me that I would be better than everyone in my family. My sisters asked me if I heard what he said and I laughed it off. It was at that moment I realized the he no longer viewed me as a human being but an object.

The emotional, verbal and mental abuse continued and one night while lying in bed I decided that I was going to leave the relationship. I told him that I was leaving and he agreed. I found my own place to live and he helped me move out. The first week of me leaving he came expectantly and knocked on my door. I cracked the door open and he forced his way into my apartment to search if anyone was there. He left and returned the following week to get some dishes he let me borrow. He came into my home with a lunch bag. He went upstairs and came back down and begin to argue with me. He told me that he didn't like how I told him that we couldn't be together anymore. He reached in his pants and pulled out a gun. He pinned himself up against the door so I couldn't leave. He told me that he wanted to end his life and that he wanted me to see what I was doing to him. After about an hour he finally let up from the door and I went to reach for the doorknob and he shot me twice and point blank range once in the chest and once in the wrist. I ran for help.

As a result of the incident my left lung collapsed, my rib bone was chipped and nerve damage was done to my left wrist. I had to have micro hand surgery. He shot himself in the head and is still living but he's paralyzed on one side of his body so I was told and has to be confined to a wheel chair. I was told by the detective that the state would pick the case up but nothing has happened.

Justice must be served to all offenders who commit such crimes. Offender's must adhere to legislation that require serious consequences. HB 1 can ensure that offenders of dating violence will comply with the law.

Furthermore, I would like to feel confident in knowing that if any human being starts to see warning signs from their partner, they can easily turn to legal services and protection from this abusive individual.

My life was spared, but another life could be lost due to lack of proper protection, and services to turn to. HB 1 can provide adequate help for individuals in need. I am determined to fight for survivors of dating violence, therefore, I am determined to fight for HB 1.