

The Honorable Janine Boyd
Ohio House of Representatives
77 S. High St.
Columbus OH 43215

February 4, 2020

Dear Representative Boyd,

We are writing to endorse HB 3, with a particular focus on your amendments to make near and non-fatal strangulation assault a specific felony offense in Ohio. While a person who commits a domestic violence strangulation assault can currently be prosecuted for a felony under the aggravated assault statute, it makes it very difficult to track these offenses and very difficult to prove them, particularly if there is little or no visible external injury. HB 3 will provide a specific charging section for prosecutors and allow Ohio to begin tracking the prevalence of strangulation assaults. Survivors of domestic violence strangulation assaults deserve and need this life-saving legislation.

Historically, strangulation has been treated the same as any punch, slap, or kick in a domestic violence setting. This profound misunderstanding of stranglers has become a life and death mistake for women experiencing domestic violence strangulation assault.

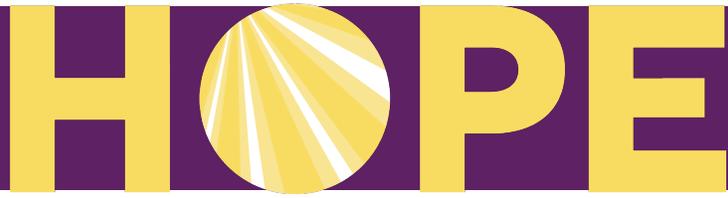
We are currently tracking women, men, police officers, and children being killed by domestic violence stranglers and without a doubt strangler are the most dangerous men in the State of Ohio.

We lead the nationally recognized [Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention](#), a program of [Alliance for HOPE International](#). We are the leading training and awareness program in the country on the handling of near and non-fatal strangulation assaults.

Men who strangle women are the most dangerous men in Ohio. If a woman is strangled one time by her partner, she is 750% more likely to later be killed by that same partner. We have a hashtag (#lastwarningshot) to remind everyone that so called “choking” of an intimate partner is usually the last warning before a rage-filled man kills his partner. When he kills her, he is most likely to shoot her, but the strangulation assault was the “last warning shot.” And too often it is not treated seriously by police officers, prosecutors, or judges.

Men who strangle women, are not just killing women. Most victims initially survive. The predators, however, are causing brain damage and long-term health consequences in thousands of women without any significant consequence for their behavior. Brain damage or other major internal injuries can begin to occur seconds into a near or non-fatal strangulation assault.

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Men who strangle women in domestic violence situations are also the cop killers of America. Our recent Internet research found that in 2017, 33 out of 44 officers killed in the line of duty in the U.S. were killed by men with a history of domestic violence in the public record – many of them with a strangulation assault history against women before they killed a police officer. California has repeatedly experienced this reality with officers killed in the line of duty. Men who strangle women are also the mass murderers of the United States. Devon Patrick Kelley in Sutherland Springs, Texas – the mass murderer in the largest killing in a church in modern American history – was a domestic violence strangler before he killed so many in a domestic violence related incident. The Air Force failed to treat domestic violence strangulation seriously which allowed Devon Patrick Kelley to kill 26 women, men, and children and seriously injure 20.

Ohio has experienced this same reality with the death of Chief Steven “Eric” Disario in 2017. Chief Disario was killed by a domestic violence strangler in an effort to save others. Thomas Hartless had long history of rage-filled domestic violence that likely included strangulation as well as access to firearms. We are currently advocating for other changes in the law in New Jersey as well and just learned that the police officer and five others killed there in the December, 2019 shootout were killed by a domestic violence strangler, David Anderson, 47. David Anderson was from Kent, Ohio and had a history of domestic violence before he went on to commit mass murder in New Jersey in 2019. He was not just anti-Semitic. He was also a misogynist and if his prior domestic violence incidents in 2009 and 2011 had been treated more seriously in Kent, Ohio, perhaps innocent lives would not have been lost in New Jersey in 2019. Ohio cannot wait any longer to pass strangulation legislation.

It will only be a matter of time until the next officer dies, shot by a strangler, a woman is shot to death after a prior strangulation assault where the offender is released from custody, or another mass shooting occurs in Ohio where a domestic violence strangler was not held accountable for a felony assault or was released from jail without consideration of the overwhelming threat to the victim and the public by his release. To date, we have passed felony domestic violence strangulation laws in 47 states but we await passage of a law in Ohio, South Carolina, and Maryland.

This is NOT the creation of a new felony. The truth is that stranglers currently populate our prisons for murder. Taxpayers are spending millions to lock murderers up for decades in Ohio after they have strangled an intimate partner and then later killed their partner or someone else. If Ohio started focusing more energy on the most violent offenders – before they kill – you would find reductions in murders in across the state and over the years.

Passing this bill is not an attack on the importance of criminal justice and bail reform which has been a significant journey in Ohio and across the country. The color of your skin or the size of your bank account should not determine whether you end up in jail or prison. But if you are a rage-filled, misogynist who is willing to take a woman to within seconds of death in a domestic violence assault, you deserve to be treated as a violent offender. Once

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convicted, based on what we know about stranglers, you deserve to go to jail or prison. Men who slap or punch women are simply abusive, men who strangle women are killers.

We are failing MANY victims – women, men, and children and very few have the courage to speak up. Women, men, and children are paying with their lives for a criminal justice and bail reform movement that does not distinguish between those who are truly dangerous and those who are not a threat to others but are simply caught in the system because of the color of their skin or the size of their income. We need to be willing to have thoughtful, reasoned conversation about prison reform while advocating for the protections of the criminal justice system against violent, rage-filled human beings who are going to harm or kill if not held accountable fully for their ongoing crimes of violence. Bail, jail, and prison reform without offender accountability become a license to kill for rage-filled, misogynistic men who strangle women.

Thank you for taking a stand against the violent crime of strangulation. Now is the time. Passing HB 3 can help increase safety for many women each year in Ohio and help prevent homicides of women, children, and law enforcement officers as we increase accountability for the most dangerous men on the planet. We are happy to provide other information as needed. Every Democrat and every Republican in Ohio should support this simple, straightforward, lifesaving, common sense bill.

Sincerely Yours,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Casey Gwinn".

Casey Gwinn, Esq.
President, Alliance for HOPE Intl.
Co-founder, Camp HOPE America &
Training Institute on Strangulation Prevention
Former San Diego City Attorney (1996-2004)

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Gael Strack".

Gael Strack, Esq.
CEO, Alliance for HOPE Intl.
Co-founder, Training Institute
on Strangulation Prevention

"It may well be that we will have to repent in this generation. Not merely for the vitriolic words and the violent actions of the bad people, but for the appalling silence and indifference of the good people who sit around and say, "Wait on time." Dr. Martin Luther King, Jr. in A Testament of Hope.

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