



May 18, 2020
House Bill 610
Interested Party Testimony

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland and Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee,

I write in my capacity as Senior Policy Attorney for Marsy's Law for All. Prior to joining this organization, I served as a trial court judge in the State of Arizona in Maricopa County for more than 22 years. During that time, I presided over a broad array of matters, including matters in the criminal and juvenile departments, and I had extensive experience ensuring the court's and the parties' observation of Arizona's crime victims' rights laws.

I write today to express my full support for House Bill 610. In November 2017, Ohio became the sixth state to pass Marsy's Law, with an overwhelming 82% of voters voting to strengthen and expand upon crime victims' state constitutional rights. It was supported by more than 375 elected officials, 16 county prosecutors, nearly two dozen county sheriffs, and state lawmakers from both sides of the aisle. As a result, crime victims in Ohio now have fully enforceable constitutional rights, including a right to be heard in public proceedings when their rights are implicated, a right to full and timely restitution, and a right to be informed of their rights.

House Bill 610 is the product of a more than two-year, collaborative dialogue that included a broad spectrum of local representatives, including representatives from the Ohio Crime Victim Justice Center, representatives from the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association, the Ohio Judicial Conference, and the Department of Corrections and Department of Youth Services, among others. Ultimately, this bill harmonizes the existing Ohio criminal code with Marsy's Law in order to bring Ohio's current law in line with its constitution. Among other purposes, HB610 provides clarity on how victims can enforce their rights. It also helps to ensure victims understand and have the opportunity to exercise their rights by requiring that victims receive written notification of their constitutional rights at or near the time of initial contact with law enforcement. Additionally, it provides for the creation of a rights request form that will make it easier for victims to request the rights to which they are entitled. Lastly, HB610 will give clarity to courts and other agencies tasked with enforcing Marsy's Law and also help to ensure uniformity in that process.

Ohioans have made clear that they believe crime victims should have a participatory voice in the criminal justice process. I urge you to support HB610 to ensure crime victims are able to understand and exercise the rights now constitutionally guaranteed to them.

Sincerely,

Maria Verdin
Senior Policy Counsel
Marsy's Law For All