



OUR MISSION

To promote access to safety, healing, justice and financial recovery for Ohio crime victims through meaningful rights and quality services.

Ohio Victim Witness Association

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House Bill 610
Proponent Testimony
May 17, 2020

Chairman Lang, Vice-Chair Plummer, Ranking Member Leland and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of House Bill 610 which seeks to expand the rights of crime victims in Ohio.

Prior to February 2018, when Marsy's Law took effect, Ohio was operating under a state-specific Crime Victims' Rights Act. The amendment, passed in 1994 and codified in 1996, went through many revisions throughout the years but was still lacking in content and enforcement. In November 2017, 83% of Ohio voters overwhelmingly showed their support of expanding victims' rights. Ohioans made their message clear that victims should not only have rights but that they should also have recourse when or if their rights are not upheld.

While this was a major milestone in the victims' rights movement, the constitutional amendment required subsequent legislative language to more specifically define and provide conditions for the amendment. A state-wide group, which included the Ohio Victim Witness Association, was formed and began work on this legislative language. This group quickly learned that in order for this bill of rights to accomplish its goal, there had to be guidance for compliance.

It has been over two years since Ohioans approved this measure. Our courts, prosecutors, law enforcement and advocates require the guidance from HB 610 so that they may properly uphold victims' rights in Ohio and provide the legal support that victims so desperately need on their road to resiliency and justice. We believe this legislation will ensure that crime victims will be able to understand and exercise their rights; that it will hold accountable those within the system responsible for ensuring victims' rights; and send a clear message that victims' rights will be as vigorously upheld as those of the defendant.

It is imperative that this legislation be passed. Ohioans are experiencing their worst days when they or a loved one become a victim of crime. Their dignity, security, health, and in some cases, their lives are being taken from them. House Bill 610 not only provides victims with enforceable rights but it also sets the path for recovery and resiliency. House Bill 610 allows the victims to be an active part of the criminal justice process. If victims feel empowered throughout the criminal justice process, they have a higher chance of recovering from what happened to them. We believe that House Bill 610 is not only a foundational component to our criminal justice system but also a step towards more trauma-informed communities. Thank you for this opportunity.

Most Respectfully,