

**SENATOR STEPHANIE KUNZE**  
16<sup>th</sup> District



STATE HOUSE ROOM 128  
1 CAPITOL SQUARE  
COLUMBUS, OH 43215  
614-466-5981  
KUNZE@OHIOSENATE.GOV

**SPONSOR TESTIMONY**  
**SENATE BILL 207**  
**NOVEMBER 14, 2017**

Chairman Bacon, Vice-Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 207, legislation that if enacted into law, would expand the offense of felonious assault to include knowingly causing or attempting to cause physical harm to another person by means of strangulation or suffocation.

Senate Bill 207 is different than legislation I introduced during the last general assembly, House Bill 362. I worked with stakeholders and advocates to find a common middle ground to address concerns that were raised last year about creating a new statute for strangulation. What this legislation proposes is to make changes to the Ohio Revised Code to address the need for domestic violence incidents involving strangulation to be included under Ohio's felonious assault statute and not create a new stand-alone code section.

While all domestic violence cases deserve our attention, strangulation is a known indicator for increased risk of homicide. Strangulation can cause injury to the brain resulting in permanent damage. Even without externally visible injuries, a victim can die weeks after being strangled from internal injuries. Additionally, strangulation is a major red flag for lethal domestic violence situations. According to the Strangulation Training Institute, women who have been strangled by their partners are 750% more likely to be murdered than domestic violence victims who have not experienced strangulation.<sup>1</sup>

I have had the opportunity to speak with the sisters of one particular victim of strangulation. Amy Webber and Niki Miller shared the story of their sister, Monica, who was a victim of strangling by her husband. On January 31, 2014, just 10 months prior to her murder, Monica was brutally strangled by her husband. The strangulation attack occurred while she was sleeping and their five young children were in the home. Their twelve year old daughter disrupted the attack and called 911 – probably saving Monica's life that night.

Her husband only served 11 days in jail on a misdemeanor domestic violence charge. Nine months later, Monica was stabbed multiple times and died the following month. By changing the classification of strangulation from a misdemeanor to a felony, we will create a cooling off period that will significantly reduce the possibility of a second offense. Had

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<sup>1</sup> [https://ocvjc.org/news/danger-strangulation?utm\\_source=Active+Contacts&utm\\_campaign=140b04c6c7-EMAIL\\_CAMPAIGN\\_2017\\_03\\_24&utm\\_medium=email&utm\\_term=0\\_9216724637-140b04c6c7-82572345](https://ocvjc.org/news/danger-strangulation?utm_source=Active+Contacts&utm_campaign=140b04c6c7-EMAIL_CAMPAIGN_2017_03_24&utm_medium=email&utm_term=0_9216724637-140b04c6c7-82572345)

strangulation been classified as a felony at the time Monica would have had a better opportunity to seek legal and medical assistance that could have provided her with the resources to ensure that she was a survivor and not a victim.

Under current law, strangulation cases in domestic violence cases are frequently not prosecuted at all and if it is then is just included as part of a misdemeanor charge.

This bill, if enacted into law, could also generate awareness for the problem of strangulation and domestic violence, and will prompt more intensive training for emergency professionals so they can better determine when strangulation has occurred.

Chairman Bacon and members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary committee. Thank you for the opportunity to present to you Senate Bill 207. I am happy to answer any questions that the committee might have.