



House Bill 392
Ohio House Judiciary Committee
Testimony by Jane Ragozine
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12/8/15

Chairman Butler, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Stinziano, and members of the Ohio House Judiciary Committee, thank you for having me here today to speak in support of House Bill 392, which would modernize Ohio's domestic violence laws. My name is Jane Ragozine, and I am a Women's Health Nurse Practitioner, Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner, and an Obstetrics Educator in the New Life Center at the Akron General Health System.

In my line of work, I encounter many patients who are victims of dating violence, which is why House Bill 392 is so important. I would like to provide a bit of perspective from the health care side of this legislation.

As of November 1 of this year, Akron General is home to the PATH Center, which stands for Providing Access To Healing. The PATH Center provides quality, trauma-informed, compassionate care to victims of sexual assault, domestic violence, elder abuse, neglect, and dating violence for Summit and surrounding counties. The center is staffed by professionals – such as myself – who are trained in the systematic collection of evidence in an atmosphere of support and compassion.

The PATH Center, developed in conjunction with Akron General's OB/GYN and Emergency Medicine Departments, uses a recognized standard of care for addressing these victims as set forth in the Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner Program (also known as the SANE program). As a Cleveland Clinic hospital, Akron General's PATH Center serves as the Clinic's southern SANE program location, with Hillcrest Hospital servicing the east side and Fairview Hospital servicing the west side.

I recently became trained (along with 22 other nurses at Akron General) to become a Sexual Assault Nurse Examiner (SANE). This certification requires rigorous training and ongoing monitoring to ensure the appropriate care and proper evidence collection for survivors of sexual assault and domestic violence. SANE examiners are also educated on the judicial aspects of sexual assault, and may be called upon to actively participate in the criminal trials against the perpetrators.

Since November 1, Akron General opened its doors to our PATH Center to provide around-the-clock services, and we have had a total of 15 patients (whom we refer to as survivors). I personally was on call to give care to 1 of these patients (as of 12/4/15). I

was there to not only provide medical attention and to collect the proper evidence, but I was there to hear the personal stories of sexual abuse and, in some cases, violence. In my role as a Women's Health Nurse Practitioner, I have also seen many patients who are victims of dating violence.

The survivors who we see in our PATH Center at Akron General are from all walks of life. The perpetrators who attack them leave them battered and bruised – sometimes physically, but always emotionally. These perpetrators are sometimes complete strangers, and they are sometimes spouses. And oftentimes, they are boyfriends, girlfriends, partners, or significant others to whom they are not married and with whom they do not reside under the same roof.

Current Ohio law defines domestic violence as occurring between spouses, family members, those cohabiting, or parents. Therefore, many of these people who we see in our PATH Center do not have the same protections when someone with whom they are in an ongoing, substantial, intimate or romantic relationship abuses them.

Many of the people we see in our PATH Center, unfortunately, have been victims of abuse and violence multiple times prior to the incident that led them to their visit.

Akron General is committed to protecting others from becoming victims of sexual violence and domestic abuse. One of the main goals of the PATH Center is to eventually use the evidence that was collected to help prosecute offenders for their acts of sexual abuse and rape.

House Bill 392 shares this commitment of protecting others from sexual and physical abuse. This bill will help us as a community and as a state to produce a safer environment for our citizens. The bill will allow victims of domestic violence at the hands of an intimate partner to obtain civil protective orders against their attacker. We believe that this bill can help by preventing further physical harm, which will therefore prevent people from having to be seen in our emergency room and our PATH Center.

Akron General is thankful to the sponsors, Representative Kuhns and our very own Representative Sykes, who represents the district that includes Akron General Medical Center. We are grateful that Reps. Kuhns and Sykes have recognized that is time that Ohio joins the 48 other states in the country who have already modernized their domestic violence laws by defining dating violence in statute.

Again, thank you again for allowing me to testify in support of House Bill 392 on behalf of Akron General. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.