



Laura Lanese
State Representative, District 23
Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 406
February 13th, 2018
Before the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee

Chairman Blessing, Vice Chair Reineke, Ranking Member Clyde, and members of the House Government Accountability and Oversight Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 406, which exempts forensic psychologists in criminal court and mental health evaluation providers that report to the probate court from public records requests.

This issue was brought to my attention by a constituent of mine who is also a forensic psychologist. Having relocated to Ohio from Virginia a few years ago she was concerned that Ohio did not exempt forensic psychologists' home addresses and private information from public records law requests. This had not been an issue in Virginia or the other six states where she had lived in the past as most states' public records laws are not nearly as strict as Ohio's. While our transparency in regards to public records is important, we have to be sure that the most vulnerable occupations are protected from possible harm.

Forensic psychologists and mental health evaluation providers work closely with criminals and oftentimes their evaluations are the impetus behind the sentencing of an individual to prison. This makes these public servants and their families vulnerable to retaliation. In Ohio, as we currently exempt peace officers, prosecutors, and a multitude of other professions that work in the criminal justice system from the public records law, it only makes sense to add forensic psychologists and mental health evaluation providers to the list.

Before introducing this bill, we held an interested party meeting which included the Ohio News Media Association, among others, and our proposal had no opposition. This legislation just attempts to fill in a previously overlooked gap that will help protect those who, unfortunately, may be subject to violence in the course of their public service duties.

I'd be happy to answer any questions from the committee.