



Office of Representative John E. Barnes, Jr.

Thank you, Chair Lehner, Vice Chair Huffman, Ranking Member Sykes, and my esteemed colleagues in the Education Committee for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on House Bill 240, the “Respect Your Date Act”.

All women and men should have the opportunity to have a safe and educational college learning experience without the fear of being sexually assaulted. A culture of rape and sexual violence permeates our higher education system, and we need to come together to work together to send a message to the world that Ohio has zero tolerance for undesired sexual behavior. This bill, while giving our universities autonomy to establish the policy, will set forth an intolerable branding for behavior that is inconsistent from what people expect from the college experience. The facts state that one in five women will be a victim of completed or attempted sexual assault while in college, and one in 16 men will be a victim of sexual assault while in college (Krebs, Lindquist, Warner, Fisher, & Martin, 2007). Also, 40% of colleges and universities in the United States reported not investigating a single sexual assault in the previous five years (U.S. Senate Subcommittee, 2014).

The Ohio Department of Higher Education has unveiled a five-part plan in order to address campus sexual violence, and these recommendations include having each school research how often sexual misconduct occurs and what the barriers are to reporting it, establishing better training to those who handle these cases, launching an awareness campaign to curb sexual misconduct, developing a comprehensive response protocol, and providing services for survivors (Sweigart, Josh, 2015). We believe that the Respect Your Date Act is very complimentary to these recommendations in further pursuit of developing a consistent enforceable policy across the state of Ohio. This bill will contribute significantly to taking a collective stance as a state to protect the integrity of our academic community, and to give women and men the college experience they deserve.

House Bill 240 will:

- require each state institution of higher education to adopt a policy with regard to dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and rape on campus, which must include a procedure for reporting, and the consequences for committing, such incidents;
- require each state institution of higher education to keep a record of all reports of incidents that it receives;
- require state institutions of higher education to post the policy in a prominent location on the institution's website;
- provide an interactive session to all entering students during new student orientation on at least the content of the institution's policy. The session may include additional education and information on identifying and preventing dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and rape. The education session may be delivered as an interactive online class.
- designate the month of April as "Respect Your Date Month" to increase public awareness of dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, stalking, and rape on college campuses.
- entitle the act the "Respect Your Date Act."

The bill further specifies that each institution's policy be developed with the goal of enhancing due process and to better define the protocols provided for under both (1) the federal "Clery Act," which requires institutions to have policies for reporting and responding to reports of criminal activities on campus, including sex offenses, and (2) Title IX, which prohibits discrimination based upon sex and requires institutions to prevent and respond to sexual harassment.

The Respect Your Date Act specifies that the terms dating violence, domestic violence, sexual assault, and stalking have the same meanings as under the federal Violence Against

Women Act, and it specifies consent must have the same meaning as under the Uniform Code of Military Justice. Each state institution may expand upon the bill's definitions in order to address additional situations and instances related to the policy.

Thank you again for this opportunity, I would be happy to answer any questions.