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**Sponsor Testimony**

**Senator Edna Brown**

**Senate Judiciary Commitee**

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Chairman Bacon, Vice Chair Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to give sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 150. Titled the “Domestic Violence Survivors Protection Act,” this bill would help prevent gun violence by keeping firearms away from domestic abusers.

SB 150 prohibits individuals who have been convicted of domestic violence, assault of a family member, or are subject to a domestic-violence restraining order from owning firearms. Twenty-six states have already enacted such legislation and have reported a significant decrease in intimate partner death by firearm.

Shamefully, Ohio does not yet have such a law.

I was prompted to pursue this legislation because of the murder of a young woman from northwest Ohio, Amanda Mangas. Amanda’s former partner, James Ramey, is now charged with shooting and killing her this past March. James had previously been convicted of domestic violence against Amanda for holding a knife to her throat when she told him she might leave him. Yet, he was still legally able to access the gun he used to kill her.

The sad truth is that Amanda is just one of many who have suffered a similar fate.

As October is Domestic Violence Awareness Month, I think it’s particularly important to address how prevalent this issue is. Every year, 5.3 million women in the United States suffer from incidents of domestic violence. Overall, one in two American women who are killed with guns is killed by a romantic partner or family member. That statistic is hard to ignore.

Additionally, 4.5 million women alive today have been threatened with a gun by an intimate partner. We must ask ourselves: how much further does a person really have to go to pull the trigger if they’ve already drawn a weapon on someone?

Support for the 2nd Amendment should go hand-in-hand with keeping guns out of the hands of people we know are dangerous. Along with constitutional natural rights comes great individual responsibility. If a person has been convicted of violent domestic abuse or is under a protection order for the safety of another human being, then that person has forfeited his or her right to own a gun.

This legislation would be enforced through a court determination affirming whether it would be unlawful for an offender to possess or purchase a firearm. If the offender is ruled unfit to possess a weapon, the court shall order a transfer of all firearms in his or her possession to a law enforcement agency or federally licensed firearms dealer. Failure to turn in a firearm would result in a 5th degree felony, and an attempt to obtain a firearm after being prohibited from doing so would constitute as a 3rd degree felony.

An individual who has been issued a court order and was not convicted of domestic violence would be entitled to obtain his or her firearms following the expiration of the court order. A person who is convicted of domestic violence would be mandated to transfer the firearms and the weapons would then be considered abandoned. He or she would be ineligible to obtain guns in the future.

While existing federal legislation bans individuals convicted of domestic violence from possessing firearms, it is difficult to enforce at the state level because federal law does not outline a procedure for surrendering firearms; states must develop their own. As a result, convicted domestic abusers have been able to get away with keeping their guns. Senate Bill 150 provides a clear-cut process for turning in weapons and encourages compliance with the U.S. Domestic Violence Offender Gun Ban.

Guns in a domestic violence situation do not make anyone safer. If we value the lives of our mothers, wives, and daughters, we have a responsibility to act. Millions of Americans have spoken and deserve to be heard: Ohio needs common-sense gun laws, and this means keeping firearms away from violent domestic abusers.

Chairman Bacon, thank you for again for allowing me to provide sponsor testimony today. I’d be happy to answer any questions from the committee.