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Ohio Senate District 23

Sponsor Testimony
Senate Bill 17
Judiciary
Chair, Senator John Eklund
Wednesday, March 6, 2019

Good morning, Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee. Thank you for allowing myself and Senator Antonio to testify on Senate Bill 17, which would redact identifying information of sexual assault survivors in online reports.

No survivor should have to face the choice between reporting a crime and maintaining the security of their privacy. It is important to provide survivors with the peace of mind that their personal information cannot be discovered via a simple Google search. I was first made aware of this issue by a constituent who has been personally affected. Last spring, the constituent was sexually assaulted and reported the incident to the local authorities. While pushing the case forward, the constituent learned that any survivor who reports a crime of sexual assault could be found online. Personal information such as the name, address, birthdate, and social security number of a survivor may be publicly listed online for anyone to find. Since its introduction in the 132nd General Assembly, several more constituents have reached out to my office who have been personally affected.

The scope of this problem cannot be understated. On average, 321,500 people are sexually assaulted each year in the United States. That is one person every 98 seconds.¹ Survivors of this horrific crime deserve respect, privacy, and transparency in the handling of their criminal complaints.

Sexual assault survivors have a lot to weigh before they bring their experiences to law enforcement because of the way they may be perceived. Many survivors are afraid that they will be shamed, questioned or viewed with skepticism about their experience. Telling the police about a crime that was committed against them should not jeopardize their safety. We know that the majority of sexual assaults are not even reported to the

¹ <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/victims-sexual-violence>

police, and out of 1000 reported rapes, only five cases ultimately end in a conviction.² Therefore, if a case does not end in a conviction, the survivor can have the confidence that their assailant will not be able to find their personal information online. This bill will protect survivors and will give them confidence in the criminal justice system.

Chairman Eklund and members of the Committee, we appreciate your attention and consideration of this important issue. We would be happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

² <https://www.rainn.org/statistics/criminal-justice-system>