



## OUR MISSION

To promote access to safety, healing, justice and financial recovery for Ohio crime victims through meaningful rights and quality services.

## Proponent Testimony Senate Bill 17 Senator Antonio and Senator Yuko July 17<sup>th</sup>, 2019

**Liz Poprocki, Executive Director  
Ohio Victim Witness Association (OVWA)**

Chairman Eklund and members of the Ohio Senate Judiciary Committee – Thank you for the opportunity and privilege to present proponent testimony to you today regarding Senate Bill 17, legislation that if enacted by law, would prohibit law enforcement agencies from including identifying information of sexual assault victims in police reports posted on-line.

Please allow me to introduce myself. I have been a crime victim advocate for 17 years. I am a Registered Advocate with Advanced Standing through the Ohio Advocate Network, a Nationally Credentialed Advocate through NACP, and a NOVA trained advocate with the Ohio Crisis Response Team. In my time as an advocate, I have developed several statewide resources and trained on the topics of victims' rights across Ohio and nationally. As a survivor, I take my job very seriously and seek to obtain justice for all victims of crime. I have had the privilege of serving victims in their time of need as a rape crisis advocate, a court advocate, a pediatric psychiatric counselor, an adult mental health counselor, and a disability advocate. Throughout my career, I have worked extensively with survivors of sexual violence and have seen firsthand the devastating effect this crime has on the lives of these individuals. Not only does the crime itself pose barriers for the survivor but the criminal justice response does as well.

As the Executive Director of the Ohio Victim Witness Association (OVWA), I oversee the services our organization provides to Ohio's advocates and the victims they serve. OVWA seeks to promote access to safety, healing, justice and financial recovery through meaningful rights and quality services by developing best practices, ensuring rights for victims of crime, providing educational opportunities and supporting public policy that supports victims and their advocates. OVWA has been a leader in the advocacy field for 41 years and continues this legacy through active public policy involvement.

It is within our purview that we support this legislation as it will protect the privacy of sexual assault survivors and help to prevent further victimization. There are many times that a survivor can be found by the offender's family and friends due to information reported in on-line police reports. These family and friends seek to undermine the survivor's claims and further victimize the survivor thereby keeping them from filing charges or following through with the criminal justice process. This legislation would support Marsy's Law by protecting the victim's privacy, providing reasonable protection from the suspect or anyone acting on their behalf, and most of all, protecting the victim's safety.

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## OUR MISSION

To establish and protect rights, fair treatment and access to quality services for crime victims and witnesses in Ohio.

Victim advocate organizations across Ohio have worked with local law enforcement to redact personal victim information on reports however; identifying victim information still ends up on the reports due to a lack of consistency in reporting requirements for law enforcement agencies. It is clear that these workarounds aren't successful. This bill would create a framework for all law enforcement agencies to follow and help streamline the process to ensure the privacy and safety of sexual assault survivors. Redaction of a victim's name and identifying information shouldn't be a matter of "courtesy" but a matter of privacy and safety. Without this legislation, all victims including minors, may have their information available on-line for the public to obtain. The redaction of this information must not be overlooked and must not be seen as a "courtesy". Instead, this is a victim right to maintain their privacy and safety.

Maintaining confidentiality is critical to sexual assault survivors and all systems should be working together to ensure a survivor's rights. Many survivors won't seek services if they know that their identifying information may be found on-line. Such information may pose a barrier to a survivor maintaining employment, obtaining employment, and seeking or obtaining housing. Confidentiality and privacy are the foundations to healing. Our systems must be equipped to provide survivors with access to recovery. Sexual violence seeks to disempower and disconnect the survivor from those around them. Ensuring privacy ensures safety. Ensuring safety allows the survivor to feel more comfortable in seeking assistance and exercising their rights.

It is the responsibility of advocates and legal systems to protect survivors of sexual violence so that they may seek recovery, justice, and healing. By passing this legislation, we can begin to prevent further victimization and build a path to resiliency.

Most Respectfully,

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Executive Director

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