

Senate Judiciary Committee
Wednesday, July 17, 2019
Senate Bill 17 – Proponent Testimony

My name is Phyllis Carlson-Riehm and I represent ACTION OHIO Coalition For Battered Women, a statewide domestic violence advocacy organization. ACTION OHIO provides resources and referrals for domestic violence victims, as well as for victims of other forms of violence. (DV victims often experience sexual assault and other forms of sexual violence as part of their intimate partner relationship.)

ACTION OHIO supports passage of Senate Bill 17, sponsored by Senators Kenny Yuko and Nickie Antonio. SB 17 is common-sense legislation that will prohibit the disclosure of any online police report that includes specific identifying information of an alleged victim of rape or sexual battery. The particular information prohibited includes:

- Name of victim
- Date of birth
- Home or work address
- Social Security number
- Age
- Telephone number
- Electronic mail address, or
- Any other information that is likely to identify the alleged victim.

According to the Rape, Abuse & Incest National Network, “Every 92 seconds, an American is sexually assaulted.” The majority of sexual assault victims are under 30. One out of every six American women has been the victim of an attempted or completed rape in her lifetime. Men and boys are also affected by sexual violence. College students are particularly at risk, as evidenced by the recent headlines detailing the victimization of 177 male students by Dr. Strauss at OSU.

Sexual violence also affects thousands of prisoners, as well as troops serving in the military. In spite of initiatives to change the culture and attitudes that enable it in prisons and the military, the numbers of victims have not greatly declined, but more victims are speaking out.

Sexual violence can have long-term effects on victims. Effects may include depression, post-traumatic stress disorder, suicide ideation and attempted or completed suicide, illegal drug use, and school and work problems. (Following the experience of rape, many students withdraw from college, or fail to complete their degree programs.)

Three out of four rapes are unreported to police. Reasons for not reporting include:

Victim feared disclosure of the incident – didn’t want family or others to know.

Victim felt ashamed/at fault, or feared being blamed.

Victim feared retaliation by the perpetrator.

Victim didn’t believe that police would believe her/his story.

Victim didn’t believe that police would do anything to help.

Victim feared involvement with the criminal justice system.

Victim didn’t want to get the perpetrator in trouble.

Victim feared that evidence is insufficient to solve or punish the perpetrator.

According to RAINN, the vast majority of perpetrators will not go to jail or prison. Reasons are varied but one would be the backlog of untested rape kits that sat for years on the shelves of police department evidence rooms. In view of the trauma experienced by victims who are raped, we should not be satisfied with any lack of response to catch the perpetrators.

If SB 17 is passed by the Ohio General Assembly and signed by Governor DeWine, it could serve as encouragement to victims that their identify will not be disclosed publicly and they will be able to avoid unnecessary scrutiny and embarrassment. This bill if enacted might enable more victims to report the crime to law enforcement and seek justice. And that would be a step in the right direction.

Thank you for the opportunity to express our viewpoint.

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