

**Testimony in Support of HB3**  
**To address high-risk domestic violence and victimization**  
**Sponsors: Representative Boyd, Representative Carruthers**

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 3, legislation that would amend sections 109.744, 109.803, 2903.01, 2919.25, 2919.27, 2929.12, 2929.13, 2929.14, 2929.22, 2935.032, 2937.23, and 3113.31; to amend, for the purpose of adopting a new section number as indicated in parentheses, section 2935.033 (2935.034); and to enact new section 2935.033 and section 2919.261 of the Revised Code; and to amend Section 221.10 of H.B. 166 of the 133<sup>rd</sup> General Assembly to add domestic violence circumstances to the offense of aggravated murder, to expand the offense of domestic violence to also prohibit strangulation of a family or household member, to require law enforcement officers to utilize a qualified lethality assessment screening tool to refer high risk victims to domestic violence resources, to create the Domestic Violence Prosecution Study Committee, to name this act Aisha's Law, and to make an appropriation. As a registered nurse for the past 23 years, seven of which were spent as a sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE), I have provided nursing care for many patients who endured domestic violence and strangulation by their assailant. I am submitting written testimony because I feel the passage of this legislation is a matter of life and death for individuals whose offenders use strangulation to gain power and control, and I recognize the need for law enforcement officers to utilize a qualified lethality assessment. Strangulation is not only a means for power and control, but victims are seven times more likely to die at the hands of these offenders, usually with a firearm or knife. Non-fatal strangulation can have devastating effects on

victims, including physical and mental long-term health problems. Currently, Ohio law has not kept up with the science on non-fatal strangulation and offenders have little to no consequence for committing such a frightening and dangerous act. Often, offenders are charged with misdemeanor domestic violence, receive little or no punishment, and return to hurt or kill the victim.

Non-fatal strangulation presents unique challenges and health risks. Victims commonly report pain with swallowing, voice changes, and headache, which are not symptoms we usually associate with life-threatening injuries or serious physical harm. But there are hidden dangers of strangulation beneath the skin that may not manifest symptoms until days, months, or even years later, including brain injury, seizures, swelling of the airway, stroke, rupture of arteries or veins in the neck due to weakening, heart arrhythmias, swelling and fluid in the lungs, and organ failure. We know that patients who report urinating or defecating on themselves during a strangulation event were near death because they started to lose control of their bodily functions. They do not always offer this information to law enforcement because they are embarrassed. Victims also experience emotional trauma from strangulation events that can last a lifetime. As a sexual assault nurse examiner (SANE), the patients I cared for who presented to the hospital after strangulation usually expressed that they thought they were going to die and worried about their children.

These attacks are violent and victims are at high-risk for death. Strangulation victims lose consciousness after 6-10 seconds and die if the event lasts just several minutes. Victims who regain consciousness report feeling dazed and confused and

their memory is often affected. There is usually little or no visible external injury with strangulation, but the hidden dangers are immense.

The amendments and additions to Ohio's domestic violence law are crucial to the safety of Ohioans. Strangulation is a serious crime worthy of serious punishment and it is time for Ohio law to reflect that. By screening victims of domestic violence using a qualified lethality assessment, law enforcement officers could save lives by referring them to much needed resources. The establishment of a Domestic Violence Prosecution Study Committee will ensure our handling of these cases is research-based and effective, and appropriations will provide the necessary funding to address the problem. These amendments and additions to the domestic violence law will save lives and send a clear message to offenders that there is serious punishment associated with the violent acts of domestic violence and strangling someone.

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