



OUR MISSION

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

Ohio Victim
Witness Association

90 Northwoods Blvd., B-6
Columbus, OH 43235

phone 614-787-9001
fax 614-396-8863
info@ovwa.org

ovwa.org



Liz Poprocki, MA, RA, CA
Executive Director, Ohio Victim Witness Association
House Bill 162
Proponent Testimony
March 9th, 2021

Chairman Hillyer, Vice Chairwoman Grendell, Ranking Member Galonski, and members of the House Civil Justice Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of HB 162 which seeks to remove and replace current derogatory statutory terminology regarding individuals with disabilities.

Throughout the decades, persons with disabilities have fought to be seen as more than their disability. They have fought to be seen as more than “mentally retarded”, “incompetent”, “deaf and dumb”, “handicapped”, “lunatics”, and more. These ableist words are rooted in historical trauma, stereotyping, and oppression which leads to persons with disabilities being dehumanized in the eyes of the law and within our communities. As a disability advocate for 20 years and a person living with a disability, I have seen first-hand how such language is used against us and erase our identity and encourage ongoing discrimination.

Ableism is the discrimination of and social prejudice against people with disabilities based on the belief that “typical abilities” and non-disabled persons are superior. Ableist language includes harmful stereotypes, misconceptions, and generalizations of persons with disabilities while revealing our unconscious biases. Current language in Ohio’s statutes is ableist and stigmatizes an already marginalized group of people. The current language is antiquated and not in keeping with the ongoing disability rights movement that seeks to remove and replace such language. Representative Galonski’s effort to ensure accurate and meaningful representation of all Ohioans, recognizes that the use of such language dehumanizes, stigmatizes, and institutionalizes Ohioans with disabilities.

In addition to our support of this bill, we support the development and implementation of a committee comprised of Ohioans living with disabilities to ensure that all language options are considered and that we are hearing from the very people who would be impacted by this change in language. Doing so would be in keeping with the disability rights movement’s slogan, “**Nothing About Us, Without Us**”. Representative Galonski’s bill is just the start of a more robust conversation that will set the foundation for more respectful treatment of Ohioans with disabilities in all aspects of our communities.

Thank you for this opportunity as well as your time and consideration on this matter. I welcome any opportunity to be a part of your solution.

Most Respectfully,

Liz Poprocki, MA, RA, CA