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### **Opposition Testimony to Substitute House Bill 459**

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair White, Ranking Member Leland, Leader Seitz, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee, I appreciate the opportunity to write to you regarding my views and concerns in opposition of Substitute House Bill 459. I previously submitted written testimony in opposition to House Bill 459. In its amended form, I still have deep concerns that I would like to share.

My name is Jonathon Hanlon. I am 41 years old, the father of two daughters (three-and-a-half and one-and-a-half years old), and husband to an amazing wife, strong partner, and phenomenal schoolteacher. I am an estimator at a general contracting firm.

It has taken me nine years to rebuild a real career, for myself, and to be a productive member of society. I am a Tier II registered sex offender. I had a previous career as an electrical engineer with Top Secret security clearance with the United States government. I worked on projects that have saved lives in our country's conflicts. I lost that career after my indictment and held odd jobs and was self-employed while I re-tooled myself and built a new career – one that finally took off this past July with my current job.

I committed the crime of viewing child pornography on the internet – I did not create it nor share it and it did not involve pre-pubescent children as is often believed. I cooperated with law enforcement and plead guilty to my crime. I was sentenced to 5 years of probation and 25 years on the sex offender registry, and also 8 years of prison that was “put on the shelf” as they say, so long as I completed my probation. I completed my “sex offender intensive probation” in 3 years and my judge released me early.

I was married at the time of my arrest in 2013 and shortly before we had bought our first home. We are still married to this day. For better or worse, in sickness and in health. We are loyal to each other. We lived in that house for eight years before the Franklin County Sheriff informed us that we were within 1,000 feet of a daycare and needed to move “ASAP” (no timeline was provided), despite the fact that nothing had changed with me or that daycare in those 8 years, except my growth as a person. We acted quickly and moved into another house in Plain City within a couple months, before any charges were filed.

Within one week of living in our new home, my wife was verbally accosted by a neighbor with whom we share an alleyway. This neighbor told my wife she should kill herself, and that she (the neighbor) would let all of our employers know, as well as all of our neighbors, and that she will work tirelessly to make us move. Within another 24 hours she had called my boss, my wife's district's superintendent, the elementary school a mile down the road from us, and children's services to advise them I was a sex offender. She was unaware that our employers already knew and we actively work with them on safeguards for them, myself, and others. Within another 24 hours she told my father he should kill himself, and at least that encounter I have on video since her actions gave me encouragement to put up security lights and cameras. We called Plain City police and they twice had to tell her to just leave us alone. The next day, she walked on our property while I was pushing my then-2.5-year-old daughter on a porch swing, left her dog's feces in my yard intentionally, and yelled “SEX OFFENDER” at me with my

daughter still present. I said nothing to her before or after. In fact, the only time I have ever spoken to this woman was the day we moved when I waved and said hello and she ignored me and walked away. She has posted on social media in a group for Ukrainians asking for legal advice if it is okay for her to put a large sign in her yard saying that I should burn in hell and that sex offenders are not welcome in Plain City. When I started putting advertising on my truck for the company I worked for, she went on Google to leave us a negative review with the comment “Buuu” [sic]. I have proof of everything mentioned here except her first assault of my wife and yelling at me and my daughter. She has no minor children. She says she wants to protect children. She routinely mutters things in Ukrainian as she walks by us. She continues to walk around our property daily. She has informed multiple neighbors and tried to rally them to make us move. Fortunately, our next-door neighbors eventually warmed up to us, despite her heinous acts, and we have become good friends.

But other than our next-door neighbors, we have no friends, acquaintances, or community involvement. That is admittedly for lack of trying or, frankly, even caring, after being treated the way we were upon arrival. So, I'd like to point out that where we used to live ALL OF OUR IMMEDIATE neighbors were made aware of my sex offense, by my own choosing, because I care about them and my own safety. All have chosen to stay our good friends. We had exchanged keys, watched over each other's properties in absences, worked on each other's homes, supported each other in difficult times, and celebrated each other's happiest moments. We attended a neighborhood community church, volunteered with our neighborhood association, cleaned streets and alleys, and participated in our local, small business economy. We were also restoring a piece of Columbus' own Prohibition era history by meticulously and respectfully repairing our Victorian home owned by Thomas Hall, who ran a local speakeasy in our very basement. We were plugged in and helping our community in every way that we had the ability to.

That level of community engagement directly correlates with reduced recidivism. That has been ripped away due to the Scarlet Letter that the Sex Offender Registry places upon people – branding them as an evil monster to be pushed to the gutters without regard for their humanity, let alone the intricate details surrounding their offense and what they actually mean.

Unfortunately, I am not a researcher, so I cannot quote scholarly, peer-reviewed articles that have shown a link between the registry and not only *increased* recidivism, but also an increase in “first-time” sexual assaults. But I can explain the cause. When you ostracize people in your society, leave them no where to turn, then they do whatever they can to survive. When you spend precious resources such as manpower, police power, computing power, and money watching thousands of individuals who have proven to be practically no risk, both through their own demonstrated growth and change as well as what all the research and statistics indicate, then your areas of other crime go up. You are the one-eyed doe with her eye on the perceived threat.

But even with my lack of research capability, I have found an article from the United States Sentencing Commission stating that sexual assault *has one of the lowest rates of recidivism* compare to all crimes. The only lower rates for the 20 categories are for “public order”, “other”, and generic “weapons” offenses (which doesn't include offenses where a weapon was used, these are for the weapon alone).<sup>1</sup>

The registry has done enough harm by itself. The original HB 459, which I voiced strong opposition to, would increase that harm 1,000-fold. I was able to rebuild my career by taking jobs which would have had me interacting with minors, because nearly every job known to mankind will have interactions with minors! I would at this point more likely be unemployed, or self-employed going into countless people's

homes as a private contractor, if I could manage to maintain a customer base not thrown off by the panic and fear induced by these kinds of laws far more so than by the criminals' histories themselves.

Substitute HB 459 is better, but it still causes more harm than good. Many Sex offenders perform volunteer work as part of their rehabilitation as ordered by our very courts, as many judges recognize the value of community service in turning people's lives around! Others volunteer because they themselves learned that value and know that giving back is something that helps them achieve purpose, gratitude, and respect for others (as well as from others).

Substitute HB 459 would also prohibit me from bringing food and gifts to my child's daycare, pre-school, school, sport, or any other club activity. I wouldn't be able to participate in those aspects of my child's life in any capacity. It would strip me, the club/school/church/organizers/other parents from making their own informed choice to allow or prohibit me. Organizations already can, and do, background checks on individuals. Obviously, many do not. Perhaps if the state wishes, more education on the importance of organizations and people getting to know the people they live and work with would make more sense.

As a parent, I have many fears that involve the safety of my children – physically, mentally, spiritually, socially, and sexually. Even I would want to keep a careful eye on any “fellow registered sex offender” who may be participating in events with my child. I certainly couldn't keep that eye out if I'm not present. I'd also present the keen ability to recognize an offender before they've been through the system, protecting my own children as well as others. I understand the importance and necessity to protect ALL children. If I had been better protected, I may not have become an offender myself. But it takes the whole village to do that.

Lastly, keeping us from involvement, engagement, and connection with our own families is statistically shown to increase recidivism. Again, this is somewhere I cannot directly cite something, but any of us who have worked in and around criminal justice know firsthand that anyone well-engaged with their family presents a significantly reduced risk of recidivism. Judges cite this routinely during sentencing, psychologists during trials, and detectives during pre-sentencing investigations. I know – because most of the questions asked of me during my pre-sentencing investigation involved marriage, parents, children, friends, community, my ability to pay my financial obligations, whether I owned or rented, etc. All of these factors are known to all involved in criminal justice to be indicators of people truly rehabilitating and becoming productive members of their communities. Please don't make it harder for people to rehabilitate. Don't make it more likely for someone to be discarded only to fulfill the prophecy created by laws such as this.

Ask anyone who knows me, truly do ask, and they will tell you I am a family man. I love my family and they come first in my decision making. We do everything as a team in a way that works to benefit us all through benefitting us individually. I want to support them in every way I can, and that means being involved in every way that I can. Do not limit my ability to continue to be a good father and a good husband. Do not do that to thousands of other men and women who have committed a crime, paid many other prices for that, and are working to rebuild their lives for themselves, for their loved ones, and for all of their communities and all of society.