

HB 105 Proponent Testimony

Sally Dyer

May 25, 2021

I'd like to begin by thanking Chairwoman Manning, Vice-Chair Bird and Ranking Member Robinson, and Members of the Committee, for the opportunity to submit my testimony in writing. My name is Sally Dyer and I am from Dayton. I have testified in front of this committee in person twice before, in 2017 and 2019, on the legislation known as Erin's Law. I am unable to be there today and hope you will take a few minutes to read this written testimony.

I am writing to encourage you to vote affirmatively for HB105 should a vote be taken today (or on another date in the future.) The reasons for this are too numerous to mention here, but I'd like to share just a couple of quotes of some of the testimony you've heard this month that overwhelmingly support the need for Erin's Law in Ohio.

The support for HB105 from numerous notable organizations in Ohio should not be overlooked. Two women, including the **Executive Director, Rosa Beltre** of the **Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV)** have testified this month. Ms. Beltre asked the question, "How do we help the over 360,000 Ohio K-12 students that are victims of sexual abuse if our schools continue to maintain our culture's long-standing reporting barriers?" Having personal body safety/child sexual abuse prevention education taught in the schools would be a good first step.

I would urge you to put your trust in some of the various organizations that are supporting HB105, including the **Cleveland Rape Crisis Center**. On May 12th you heard testimony from their **president, Sondra Miller**. She said they "provided advocacy, counseling and case management to *more than 1,500 sexually abused children*. In a year when people were sheltering in place; not leaving their homes for groceries or a haircut or a trip to the dentist...we welcomed more child survivors of rape and sexual abuse through our doors than ever before - *a 25% increase over the prior year*." Sadly, that statistic could likely be the same for many of the larger metropolitan cities in Ohio.

Additionally, the **Ohio Network of Children's Advocacy Centers** has testified multiple times in support of Erin's Law in Ohio. Their **Director of Statewide Programming, Caitlin Bentley**, in written testimony on May 12, said that Erin's Law "would help us open the doors of collaboration with our educators and administrators." Even more importantly, it would "*help us to prevent harm by responsibly empowering children with an ability to set boundaries with their own bodies, and an awareness of where to go and what to do if something bad or scary ever happens to them or a friend*."

Camille Crary of OAESV, testified that, "We in part support HB105 because it *does not require a school's full-time teachers to lead the education - giving flexibility for partnerships with rape crisis centers and child advocacy centers who have already built robust prevention programming and have trained educators with extensive experience*." I suggest we work together with OAESV, other child advocacy centers and rape crisis centers, and utilize the trained and experienced staff members to help implement this bill in Ohio.

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In addition to the numerous survivors of childhood sexual abuse - CSA, (myself included) that have testified, orally and in writing this month, several professionals with lots of experience in dealing with victims of CSA shared their insights.

Ms. Jaclyn Scanlan, a mental health therapist for 20+ years, testified, "I work with victims of sexual abuse on a daily basis....most of which have not disclosed their abuse until later into their teenage years, but it started as young children. *I would love to one day be out of a job because our children will have the tools to voice their needs to be kept safe, secure and free from life-altering trauma.*" I shared some details of my personal story pertaining to the life-altering impact that CSA can have on children with Reps. Manchester and Manning in an email. They have my permission to share that with you if you are interested. In brief, I've lost 2 siblings to suicide as a result of CSA as well as a young adult friend. The trauma of CSA is very real to me - and tens of thousands of other Ohioans as well. Let's not wait another year (or more) to pass Erin's Law in Ohio.

Finally, there was some very important testimony submitted in writing by **Amelia M. Auberger, a social worker** who has worked in the field of child abuse for more than 25 year, and was a trained Forensic Interviewer who completed more than 150 interviews of CSA victims. She stated, "The children that I reflect on as I write this testimony *were always sexually abused by someone they knew* and were taught could be trusted. *I remember clearly walking away from every interview thinking that this could have been prevented and this child's innocent life spared had they been educated and empowered with tools, language and safe people to confide in.*" Her testimony, and many of the others as well, all clearly point to the need to NOT include a "parent opt-out" clause in this bill. None of the other 37 states with Erin's Law have an opt-out provision.

This month of testimony has been the strongest I've heard and read since I began advocating for Erin's Law in 2016. It is clear to me that we have multiple, highly respected organizations all supporting and urging that HB105 be voted on affirmatively, sooner rather than later. I would encourage you to re-read some of the testimony given and submitted this month, as I think you will find it all very compelling and clearly showing why Ohio is overdue for and in great need to have Erin's Law passed.

I will close with this quote from the **Ms. Bentley of the Ohio Network of Child Advocacy Centers:**

"Erin's Law is intended to help preserve the innocence of childhood. It is our burden, and our responsibility, as adults to respond and intervene in cases of abuse. It is our burden, and our responsibility, as adults to work together and stop it from happening in the first place. We can take this burden on together."

This is certainly not a partisan issue. I cannot imagine any higher priority than protecting Ohio's children from the trauma of childhood sexual abuse. Please vote in support of HB105.