



**State Representative Kristin Boggs**

**District 18**

**State Representative Cindy Abrams**

**District 29**

**HB 254 – Sponsor Testimony**

**Senate Judiciary Committee**

**5 April 2022**

---

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for giving us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 254. By creating a pathway for counties and regions to establish domestic violence fatality review boards throughout the state, tailored to meet each county and region's needs, this bill will improve the response to domestic violence and work to prevent domestic violence fatalities.

According to a 2019 report from the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, in Ohio, 35.6% of women and 30.0% of men experience intimate partner physical violence, intimate partner rape and/or intimate partner stalking in their lifetimes.

Over the years and especially in the past year, with more people staying at home, we have seen a devastating increase in domestic violence and domestic violence fatalities. According to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence, in 2013, there were 38 domestic violence fatalities in Ohio. From July 1, 2019 to June 30, 2020, there were 109 domestic violence fatalities in Ohio. During this time, all 88 Ohio counties had incidents of domestic violence and according to the Ohio Domestic Violence Network, 29 of Ohio's 88 counties had fatal incidents of domestic violence.

The purpose of the domestic violence fatality review boards are to decrease the incidence of preventable deaths by doing all of the following:

- promoting continued communication between all groups, professions, agencies, or entities engaged in the prevention and education of domestic violence
- maintaining databases of the domestic violence fatalities to understand the causes and incidence of those deaths
- developing plans for implementing local service and program changes to the groups, professions, agencies, or entities that serve local residents that might prevent deaths by domestic violence
- providing the Department of Health with aggregate data, trends, and patterns concerning domestic violence fatalities

Similarly to the already existent Ohio Child Fatality Review Board, this legislation will allow a board of county commissioners to appoint a health commissioner to establish their county's domestic violence fatality review board. The members of the review board appointed by the county health commissioner will include professionals, such as the county coroner or chief of police, who are most equipped to address their county's domestic violence fatalities. Each review board will review the domestic violence deaths of individuals over eighteen years of age that occurred in the county.

By joint resolution, the boards of county commissioners of two or more counties may also elect to create a regional domestic violence fatality review board to review the domestic violence deaths of individuals over eighteen years of age that occurred in the participating counties.

Each board is required to submit a report to the department of health by April 1 of each year that reflects information gathered from the previous calendar year. The reports should include the total number of domestic violence deaths in the county or region, the total number of domestic violence deaths reviewed by the board, a summary of demographic information, including the sex, race and ethnicity, of the deceased and the perpetrators, a summary of any trends or patterns identified by the board, the number of domestic violence deaths that were not reviewed by the board, and finally, any recommendations for actions that might prevent future domestic violence deaths.

HB 245 will create a comprehensive process of reviewing domestic violence homicides in Ohio through a lens of prevention and accountability. It will also allow the various entities participating in the task force to share information in a way that allows that information to be kept confidential.

Thank you again for allowing us the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on HB 254. We would be happy to answer any questions committee members may have at this time.