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Jessica E. Miranda
Minority Whip

Good afternoon Chairman Manning, Vice-Chairman McColley and Ranking Member Thomas.

I appreciate the opportunity to testify before you today in support of SB 226.

In your hands, you have the article published on April 6, 2022 that tells the traumatic story of mine and my colleague Senator Cecil Thomas. Although it is necessary, it is still very difficult for me to tell my story. But little by little and day by day, it is getting a tad bit easier and I must say it is becoming very clear that I am doing the right thing each time I hear from other survivors in every corner of this state who have stories and experiences of their own that they share with me.

Starting at the age of 7, and continually throughout my childhood, I was sexually abused by a close family member, and at the age of 15, I was raped by my best friend's adult brother.

I have experienced many times in my life, things that I could not explain that I now know are the effects of trauma. More and more I learn that I am not alone, and this makes it easier to heal when you feel so alone as a child going through these traumatic sexual abuse experiences. This is why I want to continually fight to break the stigma surrounding the topics of childhood sexual abuse and rape that have traumatic effects on our lives in so many different ways.

Ohio ranks among the worst criminal and civil statute of limitations laws in the nation.¹ I would ask you to visit childusa.org to retrieve up to date information on where we rank as a state—which is literally the worst of all 50 states on several categories—and to see what other states have done and are continually doing to make their states laws better for childhood sexual abuse survivors.

I would like to make it clear that these experiences of survivors living through childhood sexual abuse and rape lead to adverse effects, which are analyzed through extensive research like the adverse childhood experiences, or ACE's, evaluation. State agencies like the Ohio Department of Medicaid utilize ACEs evaluations to understand the impact of the human and societal costs of ACEs on health care and other State systems.

¹ www.childusa.org

From the Health Policy Institute of Ohio:²

- Exposure to ACEs is a pervasive problem. Nearly two-thirds of Ohioans have been exposed to ACEs. Ohioans of color and Ohioans with low incomes, disabilities and/ or who are residents of urban and Appalachian counties are more likely to experience multiple ACEs.³
- Preventing ACEs can improve health. For example, if exposure to ACEs were eliminated in Ohio, an estimated 36% of depression diagnoses could be prevented.⁴

The biggest point I would like to make today here in my testimony, and contrary to what some may say, is that our state cannot afford to keep the statute of limitations (SOL) the way it is.

Fiscally speaking, each time we allow a survivor of a heinous sexual crime go without justice or just the opportunity of speaking out and breaking this stigma surrounding abuse and rape, we are paying for it greatly everywhere else.

Whether it is in our State budget where we allocate millions to health care, causes like domestic violence, or to the attorney general's budget in the office where we are supposed to process many top crimes against Ohioans— I assure you, the data proves we are directly paying for it. It is fiscally irresponsible NOT to do anything about our statute of limitations laws.

It is reassuring that we are working toward things like the bipartisan legislation, Erin's Law to assist our children with verbiage to provide them with the words and the curriculum we need to prevent childhood sexual abuse. We want to extend or repeal the SOL to allow for more time for survivors to come forward, should they choose, at a time they feel is best for them and their family. Quite frankly, time is running out for thousands of survivors across our state.

The average age a survivor comes forward is age 52. Our current statute of limitations laws are failing survivors of the most heinous sexual crimes each and every single day.

The supports we put in place in our State budget for mental health and services are pricing the state out of what we could be doing to break this cycle of childhood sexual abuse. Adverse childhood experiences can lead to many negative outcomes for survivors, and god forbid someone hurts themselves or others because they realize when they are 50 that the time has run out for them to bring their perpetrator to justice. The good news is we have the opportunity to do something about this now—and that is passing SB226

The bottom line for me and so many other survivors is that there should be no expiration date on when a survivor of rape or childhood sexual abuse can bring their abuser to justice.

² <https://www.healthpolicyohio.org/>

³ <https://www.healthpolicyohio.org/adverse-childhood-experiences-aces-health-impact-of-aces-in-ohio/>

⁴ Ibid

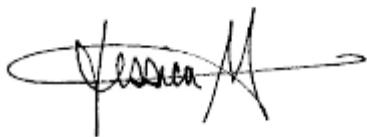
I'd like to speak plainly for my personal experiences and make it very clear that I do NOT seek to bring any of my abusers to court either criminally or civilly. I want simply for my state and its laws to reflect the kind of respect I deserve as a survivor of some of the most heinous sexual crimes.

There are many survivors who feel and want the SOL laws to be extended or repealed for reasons like mine or to seek a different solution that matches their needs.

In conclusion, I strongly believe it is time for the State of Ohio to repeal the SOL for ALL survivors so that our laws reflect the respect Ohioans deserve especially and explicitly for such heinous sexual crimes perpetrated by sexual predators who are most times, our close family members. Therefore, those of us elected to serve in these chambers need to act to support and pass SB226 or HB266 and stand solid on our promise to serve the people of this state and protect them from the types of sexual perpetrators that do not belong in our homes, our churches, our schools, our sports programs, our scout programs, our workplaces, and anywhere else a sexual crime can be committed. Ohioans need the laws in our State to protect them and allow a pathway to justice that they deserve, whether they wish to bring their abusers to justice or if they do not.

Again, to Chairman Manning, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary committee, I thank you from the bottom of my heart for allowing me to testify in support of SB226 today.

And to Senator Nickie Antonio and Senator Stephanie Kunze, I am so proud to serve with you and I am so appreciative to you both for introducing this bipartisan legislation and for allowing me to testify on behalf of your bill and, most importantly, to give voice to thousands, possibly millions of Ohioans who share my same lived experiences and need our State to do something now to protect our children from pedophiles and sexual predators who take advantage of state laws that allow them to get away with committing the most heinous sexual crimes.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Jessica E. Miranda". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending to the right.

JESSICA E. MIRANDA
Minority Whip, 28th District
614-466-8120
Rep28@ohiohouse.gov