

Proponent testimony submitted to the Ohio Senate Primary and Secondary Education
Committee

House Bill 105

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Violence Prevention Coordinator

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Chairman Brenner, Vice Chair Blessing, Ranking Member Fedor, and Members of the Senate
Primary and Secondary Education Committee:

Thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 105, also known as Erin's Law,
on behalf of SARNCO, the Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio – Franklin
County's rape crisis center.

**Every 68 Seconds, an American is sexually assaulted; every nine minutes the victim is a
child*.** Every. Nine. Minutes. That's 160 children who will be assaulted just today - 160 tiny
souls shaped and changed by the trauma of sexual violence. If one child is sexually assaulted
every nine minutes, then how do we drop that number down to one child every 12 minutes? Or,
one child every 30 minutes? What would be an acceptable number of assaults per hour or per
day? What, instead, if our goal were to eliminate sexual violence towards children altogether?
How would that feel? How would that impact our city? Our state? Our nation? Our future?
How do we get *there*?

The answer to this public health emergency is prevention education and skill building for adults
and children alike. We must do a better job of protecting our children through comprehensive
prevention education efforts and we must do it now. We cannot wait.

**Of all survivors under age eighteen, 66% are between the ages of 12-17 and 90% know
their abuser*.** That's why, at SARNCO, our school-age prevention currently focuses on middle-
and-high-school aged students and the askable, caring adults in their communities and homes.
Our primary prevention programming focuses on challenging social norms and changing
behaviors to create protective environments proven to reduce sexual violence.

SARNCO does its best to impact the lives of as many students as possible, but we're a small
rape crisis center. I am the only youth-focused rape crisis center preventionist working in Ohio's
largest county which includes Columbus, the Midwest's second largest city after Chicago.
Franklin County has the highest numbers per capita of sexual violence in the state in all age
groups. **In Franklin County alone there are 14 school districts, 56 middle-and-high
schools, and approximately 96,351 middle-and-high-school aged students**.** I (and the
other few agencies working to end violence in our community) can only impact a tiny percentage
of these thousands of children. Erin's Law will see that all staff and students in Franklin County
receive the fundamental skills and education they need to protect themselves and each other.

In my experience, most students are keen to know more about sexual violence, dating violence, and other intersecting types of interpersonal, power-based violence. They want to help be a part of the solution. They want to actively create and support non-violent communities. *They need us to teach them how.*

In a healthy relationships and active bystander intervention class, students start the day by anonymously reporting why they are attending the course. Many are survivors and/or co-survivors of sexual violence. Here are just a few of hundreds of similar youth voices:

- “I have a close friend who experienced dating and sexual violence. I’ve seen how it’s hurt them, and I want to be able to prevent that experience from happening to others.”
- “Nobody stepped in for me. I want to look out for others.”
- “I want to have a plan for how I can help, because I know the day will come when I can step in and help stop harm.”
- “I’ve never seen a non-violent, healthy relationship. I don’t know what it looks like and so don’t think I’m capable of it - but I’d like to be...I’d like to know a different kind of love.”
- “I saw someone get assaulted. I froze. I did nothing. I’d like to know more about how to stop violence that is happening so I can do better in the future.”
- “Someone close to me was sexually assaulted by their partner last year.”
- “I need help helping a friend who is in an abusive relationship. I don’t know how to help them. I don’t know what to say and no one teaches us this stuff.”
- “My Mom says the groping and touching are compliments and I should enjoy the attention while I’m young and pretty. It feels wrong. I know it’s wrong. But I don’t know what to do and no one seems to care. It happens all the time and not just to me.”
- “I know too many people who have been sexually assaulted by adults and peers. It has to stop. I want to do my part, but there’s so much I don’t understand.”
- “I’m tired of seeing my friends experience trauma and violence. I want to be a part of the solution.”
- “The impacts of dating violence and coercive sex impact more than just the survivor. I want to help stop this violence, but I don’t know how.”
- “My best friend experienced sexual violence from someone she trusted, and after going to the school about it, they told her there wasn’t anything they could do. I’m here because we need to take sexual violence victims more seriously. We have to hold adults and others who perpetrate harm accountable.”
- “There were too many incidences of sexual violence at school this last year...so many I can’t even remember them all. It’s so sad.”
- “I’ve been told by my grandpa that men cannot be raped. So then, what happened to me? Where does that leave me?”
- “No one should have to go through some of the things I have been through, especially not without help. It’s hard to fight some/a lot of the battles alone.”
- “I understand the silent struggle of being assaulted. I want to know how to help.”

- “When I was 13, I was raped two times by my (then) best friend. Last year I was raped by my cousin. I’m here because I want to do everything in my power to help lower the percentage of sexual violence.”
- “I have experienced sexual assault and heard about preventing acts of violence. I would do anything to prevent others from being put in this position. I want to help to try and combat the problem.”
- “I want to help a friend who is in a violent, unhealthy relationship. They don’t see it and I want to be able to help them understand.”
- “My siblings and I were abused by a respected adult. No one believes us. I just want to let everyone know I am here to help if I can. I believe them. They’re not alone.”

The sexual abuse of our children can stop. It must stop. Your vote on House Bill 105 plays an important part. Please pass Erin’s Law.

On behalf of SARNCO, I, Eliza Sabo, Citizen of Ohio and Sexual Violence Preventionist, strongly encourage the passage of House Bill 105. Passing House Bill 105 will make a vital difference in the lives of Ohio’s children and Ohio’s school communities. Thanks again for taking time to hear testimony on this important bill.

**Statistic Credit: US Department of Justice – Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2020.*

***Statistic Credit: US News and World Report*