

Proponent Testimony for HB 161: Spousal Exception
Criminal Justice Committee

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Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member, and Brown and members of the Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee, thank you for this opportunity to submit my testimony in support of House Bill 161.

My name is Kathaleen Weyer, and as a retired mental health professional, parent, and grandparent I ask that you pass HB 161. This bill would eliminate the spousal exception for rape, sexual battery, unlawful sexual conduct with a minor, gross sexual imposition and sexual imposition. Since my retirement I have invested my time in promoting and teaching child abuse prevent education and have worked with other groups and individual to advocate for laws that will better protect children from sexual abuse, rape and violence in their home, schools, and community. Removing the spousal exceptions is a positive step in making this happen.

Sexual violence in our homes is not uncommon and our children are not well served when it occurs to them directly or they witness it taking place around them. We need to ensure that Ohio children can grow up in supportive and nurturing environments. We need to work to remove those who choose to rape and sexually assault others from access to our children. House Bill 161 would be an effective way to protect our children and families from ongoing sexual violence.

For over 25 years I worked as a therapist in the mental health field with children and teens, many of them victims of sexual abuse. Their journey from victim to survivor was most often tenuous and fraught with setbacks and frustration. Suicidal ideation, substance abuse, school failure, dysfunctional personal relationships, family chaos, joblessness and homelessness often follow sexual abuse. The damaging mental, physical, and emotional traumas of sexual battery, rape and sexual abuse and misconduct in all its forms are most often life-long. Preventing such tragic harm is critically important for our society's well-being.

I ask that you exercise your legislative powers to endorse HB 161 and make every effort to ensure its passage into law.

Thank you.

Kathaleen Weyer