

MISSION

YWCA is dedicated to eliminating racism, empowering women and promoting peace, justice, freedom and dignity for all.



eliminating racism
empowering women
ywca
Northwest Ohio

**House Criminal Justice Committee
Proponent Testimony for House Bill 161
Rachael Gardner MSW, LISW Director of Victim Services
The YWCA of Northwest Ohio
October 10, 2023**

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:


I am Rachael Gardner, the Director of Victim Services for the YWCA of Northwest Ohio where I oversee our local domestic and sexual violence services to the Toledo/Lucas County community. The mission of the YWCA is to empower women, eliminate racism, and promote peace, justice, and dignity for all. Our organization responds to approximately 150 survivors in hospitals for forensic rape kit exams, answers over 1,500 crisis calls, and shelters roughly 500 men, women, and children annually. I am asking this committee to support House Bill 161 and to eliminate the Spousal Rape Exception from the Ohio Revised Code.


Sexual violence remains a stigmatized victimization to endure and is one of the only crimes in which the victim is expected to bear the burden of responsibility for safety. The experience of sexual violence is far different than is so often portrayed in our society as strangers lurking in the night. Rape is most often perpetrated by someone the victim knows, trusts, and has a relationship with. As an advocate, I often reflect to our community that if you know 3 women, then you know someone who has been raped by a partner in their lifetime. Exceptions to spousal rape, such as the use of intoxicants to impair your partner's ability to consent, perpetuate the stigma that the victim is responsible for the crime committed against them and is a shameful experience. By voting yes to House Bill 161 you are directly communicating to survivors, advocates, and constituents that no matter the relationship between two individuals rape, sexual battery, unlawful sexual conduct with a minor, gross sexual imposition, and sexual imposition are crimes.

I respectfully encourage the House Criminal Justice Committee to support the passage of House Bill 161. Thank you for your time and the opportunity to provide this testimony in support of this legislation.


Kind Regards,
Rachael Gardner MSW, LISW
Director of Victim Services
YWCA of Northwest Ohio


**YWCA IS ON
A MISSION**


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