

60th House District
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Committees
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State Representative

Good afternoon, Chairwoman Abrams, Vice Chair Williams, Ranking Member Brown, and esteemed members of the Criminal Justice Committee.

In our community, we often hear the phrase “One Olentangy”. It means one child in this district is everyone's child and unfortunately, as a community there are times when we are faced with our darkest of hours. We feel pain and wonder what the parents must be going through. And for a moment we can't help but put ourselves in their shoes, hug our children a little tighter, and cry for their unbearable loss. At the time of Braden's death, I had four children at Liberty high school. Each of them knew someone close to Braden. We had a lot of conversations with our children about what happened and how we can move forward to make sure this never happens to anyone again.

Financial sextortion is the fastest-growing crime targeting children in North America. There has been a tenfold increase in these acts in the last year alone and this data is almost certainly understated. since it relies on reported incidents. Because these crimes are relatively new, new legislation is needed. Predators have moved from the parks and playgrounds to our very own homes with the increase in smartphones. Braden's law makes sexual extortion a crime with severe penalties.

Braden's law is multifaceted, because this crime is so new, at the time of Braden's death, victims weren't eligible for inclusion in the crime victim's compensation program. This meant

that counseling for Braden's sister, who found him, was not covered along with many other expenses the family incurred.

We are pleased to announce that Braden's Law will be included in the crime victim's compensation fund for all victims of sextortion and their families; and we are proud to have the support of Attorney General Yost whose office administers the crime victim's compensation program.

Suicide often leaves families with many unanswered questions. In Braden's case this was further complicated by the inability of his parents to gain access to his phone. One of the provisions in Braden's Law will require the courts to do an expedited review (30 days) of a request for digital access to a device if the request is made by a parent or guardian of a deceased minor, because Braden's parents were denied access to his phone by tech giants. It tragically took them 10 months to gain this access and fully understand what happened to their son. Braden's law also absolves the cell phone carrier of liability allowing them prompt cooperation with families of victims.

Braden's classmates and lifelong friends graduated from Olentangy, and they will start their journey into adulthood. I can't imagine how difficult these past three years have been for the Markus family. They could have gotten swallowed in grief, and no one would have blamed them, but instead, they got busy sharing their story and encouraging parents to talk to their kids. They created a scholarship fund and raised money, lots of money for it. They celebrated all of the other kids' accomplishments and most importantly they led the charge on creating this impactful legislation.

It is not easy to talk openly about being the victim of sexual extortion, but Braden's family didn't care and worked to shatter the stigma. I know the world is a safer place because of their efforts to bring awareness to this heinous crime. I am honored to be a primary sponsor of

this legislation and I will work tirelessly for this family and community to make sure we get this passed and signed by the Governor.

This bill is a solid piece of legislation that was carefully created with the help of our Prosecutor and County Sheriff. This legislation should be something that all 99 of us get behind and get passed. We are on borrowed time in preventing another tragedy from happening, so I am personally calling on all of you to get this bill passed out of committee as expeditiously as possible with unanimous support. Thank you all for hearing my testimony today.