

**Proponent Testimony of United States Marshal Peter Elliott
Regarding House Bill 217**

Chairwoman Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Public Safety Committee, thank you for the opportunity to offer testimony in support of House Bill 217, also known as the FIND Act, which will be a valuable tool to assist law enforcement in Ohio in missing person investigations.

I have been a law enforcement officer in the State of Ohio for nearly 40 years and for the last 22 years I have had the privilege to serve as the United States Marshal for the Northern District of Ohio. The Justice for Victims of Trafficking Act of 2015 enhanced the U.S. Marshal Service's discretionary authority to assist other law enforcement agencies with the recovery of missing, endangered or abducted children, and in 2023 my office established a dedicated Missing Child Unit consisting of federal and local law enforcement agencies. This unit supports the National Center for Missing and Exploited Children's (NCMEC) mission to protect children from victimization by providing assistance to federal, state and local law enforcement agencies.

NamUs is one of the most frequently used national databases for our missing persons cases, including missing children and fugitive cold cases. NamUs provides a unified and secure database for missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons records. Their database allows for searching, cross-matching, and sharing of case records and information about missing and unidentified persons. It is also free and accessible to the public which allows any individual, especially family members of a missing person, to access the database and consistently cross-check any and all information within the system.

The FIND Act would require law enforcement to enter missing persons cases into NamUs within thirty days of a report being filed with a local or state law enforcement department/agency. This requirement would greatly assist law enforcement and medical personnel in regards to missing persons cases by utilizing technology and information sharing across the state and country. The use of NamUs by law enforcement and medical personnel has been instrumental in resolving missing person cases that have gone unsolved for several years. There are existing requirements for law enforcement and medical personnel to enter missing persons into other databases, and the addition of NamUs as a requirement would greatly enhance investigations into these cases.

Several states across the country have implemented the FIND Act, and HB 217 would align Ohio with those states that have seen positive results in the resolution of cases due to the mandatory reporting. The FIND Act would also result in better efficiency and overall coordination between local, state, and federal agencies, establish a systematic and mandatory process for reporting missing persons cases, and greatly improve the ability to resolve missing person and unidentified remains cases. I strongly support this bill.

Thank you for the opportunity to speak today. I would be happy to answer any questions you may have.