



ADAMS COUNTY PROSECUTING ATTORNEY
Aaron E. Haslam

Testimony in Support of House Bill 217 (The FIND Act)

Presented by Aaron E. Haslam, Adams County Prosecutor and OPAA's Representative on Ohio Governor Mike DeWine's Missing Persons Working Group

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I want to thank Chairwoman Abrams, Vice-Chairman Miller, Ranking Member Thomas and the rest of the members of the Public Safety Committee for the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 217, known as the Finding and Identifying with NamUs Data (FIND) Act.

My name is Aaron Haslam, and I appear today as the Adams County Prosecutor and a member of the Ohio Governor Mike DeWine's Working Group on Missing Persons, where I served as the representative for the Ohio Prosecuting Attorneys Association (OPAA). I am deeply committed to strengthening Ohio's response to missing persons cases.

According to the Ohio Governor's Missing Persons Working Group Final Report, over 21,000 missing person reports were filed in Ohio in 2024. Of those, 16,404 involved children, and while most were eventually located, hundreds remain missing—some for months or years. That same report uncovered systemic challenges in how missing person data is collected, stored, and used across jurisdictions.

NamUs represents one of the most effective tools to close those gaps. But it cannot work unless we mandate its use. That's exactly what HB 217 does—ensuring that data is entered consistently and reliably, so that families and investigators have a real chance to make connections that lead to recovery and justice.

HB 217 reflects the spirit and direction of the Governor's Working Group. I especially want to highlight Recommendation #4 and Recommendation #8, which go hand in hand with this bill. HB 217 is being amended to add these two very important recommendations from the Governor's Working Group.

- Recommendation #4 calls for giving law enforcement the legal tools to act decisively by authorizing administrative search warrants in high-risk missing person investigations. As of now, law enforcement can only obtain search warrants if probable cause of a crime is established. However, in missing persons cases, such information may not exist in the early investigatory stages of these cases. An administrative search warrant will assist law



unresolved cases across the country—giving local officers access to leads they might otherwise never see.

- Recommendation #8 urges Ohio to digitally preserve unresolved missing person records, protecting them from loss and making them accessible for future generations of investigators. NamUs already provides this secure, cloud-based infrastructure. By integrating it into Ohio's standard practice through HB 217, we can immediately meet that recommendation without reinventing the wheel.

Let me also note that HB 217 does not require costly new technology or massive staffing increases. NamUs is already federally funded, free to use, and actively supported by the U.S. Department of Justice. What's missing is simply a requirement—legislative direction—to ensure its consistent use. That's the gap this bill fills.

In closing, House Bill 217 is both a practical and moral imperative. It implements two of the most forward-thinking recommendations from the Governor's task force and sends a clear message to families that the State of Ohio takes their cases seriously—not just on day one, but for as long as it takes.

I urge the committee to give HB 217 its full and favorable consideration.

Respectfully submitted,



Aaron E. Haslam