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Dear Members of the Public Safety Committee,

As a high school administrator and former teacher dedicated to protecting the students and families in my care, I respectfully urge you to strengthen the FIND (Finding Individuals Not Discovered) Act by incorporating two vital provisions that will significantly enhance Ohio's ability to respond to missing persons cases—particularly those involving children and other high-risk individuals.

First, I urge the committee to support legislation that allows law enforcement and county prosecutors to seek search warrants for access to information and records that could aid in locating a high-risk missing person. Students, regardless of socioeconomic status, have cell phones and they are often constantly in communication with their friends through social media. In emergencies involving minors, victims of trafficking, or individuals with mental health vulnerabilities, rapid access to digital and personal data can be the key to saving a life. Granting this legal authority ensures that public safety officials can act swiftly and effectively in moments of crisis.

Second, I strongly advocate for legislation that requires local law enforcement agencies to digitize unresolved missing persons reports prior to the destruction of paper files. Additionally, the Bureau of Criminal Investigation (BCI) should be tasked with creating and maintaining a centralized digital repository for these cases. The current lack of consistent data retention and sharing practices across jurisdictions hinders the pursuit of justice and closure for countless families. A unified digital system would preserve critical information and facilitate more coordinated investigations statewide.

As a school leader, I can attest to the deep and lasting trauma that a missing student inflicts on a community. We have a shared responsibility to ensure that law enforcement and investigative agencies are equipped with the legal tools and technological resources needed to respond decisively when a person disappears.

In my own time as a school leader, I've experienced the anguish of hearing from a parent when their child didn't come home. I've stood beside the family as they wrestled with fear, uncertainty, and helplessness, desperate for answers. These are not just policy issues—they are deeply personal. Every missing student is someone's child, friend, and classmate, and we need to do better—for them, and for every family left waiting for news.

I thank you for your continued service and commitment to public safety, and I urge you to take meaningful action by including these provisions in the FIND Act. Together, we can strengthen our collective efforts to protect Ohio's most vulnerable residents.

Sincerely,  
Lydia Smith-Lockwood  
Principal  
Upper Arlington High School