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Thank you, Chair and members of the committee, for the opportunity to present sponsor testimony for House Bill 217, also known as the FIND Act.

In 2004, a member of my family was abducted. For nine long years, we searched for her—clinging to hope, enduring the unknown, and navigating a system that often left us feeling helpless. In 2013, we were one of the few lucky families. My cousin, Gina DeJesus, along with two other women, was able to escape from her captor in the Clark-Fulton neighborhood of Cleveland, Ohio.

Today, Gina and I are co-founders of the Cleveland Family Center for Missing Children and Adults—Cleveland Missing. Over the past five years, we’ve worked with more than 300 families who, like ours once did, live in the limbo of ambiguous loss. We understand firsthand the emotional toll, the confusion, and the heartbreak that come with not knowing where your loved one is—or whether help is truly being maximized.

One of the hardest truths families face is realizing how inconsistent our systems can be. Right now, law enforcement agencies in Ohio are *not required* to enter missing persons information into NamUs—the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System. This is a free, national database that has already helped resolve over 46,000 cases across the country. It offers forensic services, investigative tools, and critical connections—all at no cost.

HB 217, the FIND Act, seeks to change that. This legislation would require all Ohio law enforcement agencies to enter missing persons information into NamUs within 30 days of a report being filed. It’s a simple, effective, and compassionate step that aligns our state with best practices already adopted in 16 others.

NamUs is the only national database dedicated specifically to missing, unidentified, and unclaimed persons. It empowers investigators with comprehensive data and gives families a public voice and a sense of progress during a deeply uncertain time.

Making NamUs entry mandatory ensures that law enforcement is equipped with the best tools available, that families are better informed and supported, and that Ohio sends a clear message: no one who goes missing should be invisible.

Lastly, on behalf of Cleveland Missing, I was chosen to participate in the Governor's working group to establish recommendations related to the missing. The following additions should be included in the bill and passed in totality.

- Recommendation #4:
  - The Ohio General Assembly should create legislation authorizing law enforcement and county prosecutors to seek search warrants to gather information and records that may help them locate a high-risk missing person.
- Recommendation #8:
  - The Ohio General Assembly should create legislation requiring local law enforcement agencies to digitize unresolved missing persons reports prior to the destruction of paper files. BCI should also create a digital repository to store missing persons' case records from local law enforcement agencies.

We respectfully urge your support for HB 217—for the sake of every family still searching, still waiting, still hoping.

Thank you for your time and consideration. We are happy to answer any questions the committee may have.

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