

House Public Safety Committee
House Bill 217 – Proponent Testimony
Tuesday, June 17, 2025

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Public Safety Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 217, Enact the Finding and Identifying with NamUs Data (FIND) Act. I am Carolyn M. Kinkoph, the parent and legal guardian of Courtney M. Kinkoph, a formerly missing endangered adult daughter who was found deceased on February 7, 2022. I strongly support H.B. 217 to amend section [2901.30](#)¹, [2901.41](#)², and [2901.42](#)³ of the Ohio Revised Code to require law enforcement agencies to enter information relating to a report of a missing person in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). Using available tools, including the free national database NamUs, provides timely critical information to facilitate the recovery of missing loved ones. Recovery of living missing persons can aid in providing resources for sustainable healing. Recovery of deceased missing persons can resolve cases and bring closure to families.

According to the Administration for Children & Families, runaway/missing and homeless “youth can become victims of violence, develop serious mental health and addiction problems, and be forced to trade sex for basic needs,” ([FYSB, 2018](#)).⁴ The National Center for Missing & Exploited Children describes runaway youth (missing persons) with vulnerabilities that traffickers prey upon and victimize for their own benefit, ([NCMEC, 2024](#)).⁵ Runaways and missing youth are recruited by traffickers, ([Williamson & Prior, 2009](#)).⁶ Missing and homeless adults are also vulnerable and victimized by traffickers. Sadly, this was evident with the victimization of my missing and endangered 29-year-old adult daughter, Courtney.

Courtney suffered from mental trauma, poly-substance use issues, and was a victim of trafficking in persons. She was reported missing to police several times from 2016 to 2021 and repeatedly victimized due to her vulnerabilities. In 2017, Courtney was deemed incompetent through Lake County Probate Court in Ohio Case No. 17 GU 1075 as noted in the filed Letters of Guardianship dated May 23, 2017 that can be provided upon request. Subsequently, a Civil Protection Order was granted in March 2020 in the Court of Common Pleas, Lake County Ohio, Case Number 20CS000061 against one individual who facilitated her victimization. Courtney’s victimization was reported to numerous agencies in hopes of seeking assistance from the [National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)⁷, the Northeast Ohio Human Trafficking Task Force ([Office of the Ohio Attorney General, 2022](#); [Task Forces \(cuyahogacounty.gov\)](#))^{8,9} and direct service providers.

On June 1, 2019, Courtney was reported to law enforcement as a missing person from a group home in Ohio. I researched and learned how to submit her information to NamUs. My entry required law enforcement approval for it to be changed to an accepted status in the system. This

¹[Section 2901.30 - Ohio Revised Code | Ohio Laws](#)

²[Section 2901.41 - Ohio Revised Code | Ohio Laws](#)

³[Section 2901.42 - Ohio Revised Code | Ohio Laws](#)

⁴[Runaway & Homeless Youth Program Overview Fact Sheet \(hhs.gov\)](#)

⁵[Child Sex Trafficking \(missingkids.org\)](#)

⁶[19361520802702191.pdf](#)

⁷[Home | National Human Trafficking Hotline](#)

⁸[2022-Human-Trafficking-AR WEB \(ohioattorneygeneral.gov\)](#)

⁹[Task Forces \(cuyahogacounty.gov\)](#)

delay prevented the ability for NamUs to share their free forensic and investigative support for law enforcement, medical examiners, and our family.

After Courtney was located several months later, her father and I hired an Uber driver to bring her home from Detroit, Michigan on September 5, 2019. She was incarcerated upon her return because of the issuance of a bench warrant from missing her mental health court date. Upon this recovery, Courtney shared that while she was reported missing to police, someone had dropped her off at a women's shelter in Ohio where she was picked up by a truck driver. She was then transported to Detroit, Michigan. Courtney was trafficked for several months. She stated she was forced by her trafficker to beg and panhandle to earn a daily quota for permission to sleep in the apartment. When she was unable to meet her daily quota, Courtney slept in abandoned alcoves and buildings. Courtney later admitted to a PASRR nurse and the jail treatment supervisor around January 2020 that she was "a victim of human trafficking and it was unfortunate."

On April 20, 2020, Courtney was reported missing again to another local police department within Lake County, Ohio. She was sighted by police at a rest stop in Brush, Colorado after first traveling to Pittsburgh, PA from Ohio, sighted in Santa Monica, California, then finally recovered by Allen Park, Michigan police. This was the only recovery that was successful with law enforcement assistance out of the numerous times that Courtney was reported missing to multiple police agencies. She was recovered out of state by the Michigan law enforcement agency who cooperated with the local Ohio law enforcement agency by detaining Courtney until her parents and Legal Guardians were able to transport her safely back to Ohio for medical treatment. This successful recovery could not have been done without the sighting, information sharing, and follow up that resulted in interagency cooperation between trained law enforcement officers. One barrier for law enforcement is that victims are groomed, fearful, and can develop a trauma-bond while victimized and/or missing which prohibits them from seeking assistance from law enforcement, medical treatment, or other needed services. Fortunately, this time law enforcement looked beneath the surface and coordinated efforts for a successful recovery, which is not always the outcome.

Courtney died as a result of her human trafficking victimization while she was a reported missing person. She went missing for the last time from a group home in Ohio on November 9, 2021. Once again I entered the missing person case involving my daughter, Courtney, into NamUs. After completion of the verification request returned from a Lieutenant at the local police department, Allen Neal, NamUs Regional Program Specialist, RTI international, Center for Forensic Sciences sent me the following e-mail response, "Your entry was very thorough, and I have contacted Willoughby PD for validation/authorization. I have moved the case to "Published" state in our system. Publication will allow the case to be available nationally to other law enforcement professionals and public users so they can view the entry for comparisons of unsolved missing and unidentified person cases. The sensitive case information areas are all in protected view and can only be seen by vetted law enforcement professionals and medical examiners." It was the medical examiner's office who identified Courtney and called to tell me the tragic news no mother wants to hear. She was found deceased on February 7, 2022 in an abandoned apartment in Cleveland, Ohio.

Courtney previously told me in 2021 that she talked to strangers online because she would never have to worry about meeting them in person. She was wrong as are so many children and adults in

Ohio and elsewhere who are groomed and preyed upon because of their vulnerabilities, sometimes by individuals who will travel to pick them up and transport them to other locations in the State of Ohio and throughout the United States. Without the ability to identify missing persons through monitored technology such as NamUs, law enforcement and others miss opportunities to safely recover them, plus medical examiners cannot identify deceased victims to provide closure to families.

As Courtney's mother, I advocated for her care her entire life along with her father. There were multiple human trafficking occurrences in several Ohio counties and out of State. Courtney's history of human trafficking and elopement were documented in her annual Lake County Probate Court Expert Evaluations as well as in her PASRR interview statement from January 2020 while she was incarcerated for possession of drugs obtained through her coercion. Additionally, there are several police reports from various jurisdictions in Ohio and out of state. It is critical for law enforcement agencies to enter information in NamUs for support that aids in recovery along with prevention of further victimization and traumatization for missing persons and their loved ones. As the survivor mother of a missing person and human trafficking victim whose victimization led to her death, it is important for me to advocate for survivors and victims, like Courtney. You can make a difference, too.

Chair Abrams, Vice Chair Miller, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Public Safety Committee, thank you for allowing me to provide proponent testimony for House Bill 217, legislation requiring law enforcement agencies to enter information relating to a report of a missing person in the National Missing and Unidentified Persons System (NamUs). I would be glad to answer any questions.