

May 30, 2025

Senator Jerry Cirino
Chair, Senate Government Oversight Committee
Ohio Senate
Columbus, OH 43215

**STARK COUNTY SHERIFF ERIC WEISBURN
WRITTEN STATEMENT IN SUPPORT OF AUTOMATED CRIME VICTIM NOTICE SYSTEM
HB 96 OHIO BIENNIAL BUDGET BILL**

When Ohio voters overwhelmingly passed State Issue 1, also known as Marcy's Law, in 2017 victims of criminal offenses were afforded constitutionally-protected rights. Among these guaranteed rights, victims are automatically entitled to be notified about the status of their case, be present at all public hearings and proceedings as well as the ability to make a victim statement to the court.

Victims can also request, or opt in, to receive notices about the arrest, escape, or scheduled release of their offender; have personal identifying information redacted from court documents; notice of all public court hearings; the ability to communicate with the prosecutor assigned to their case; receive notices on subpoenas, motions or other efforts to access any of their personal information; and the ability to name someone else to represent the victim in the case.

Though extremely well-intentioned, Marcy's law has created significant financial and compliance burdens on law enforcement agencies all across Ohio, and the Stark County Sheriff's Office is no exception. Providing victims of crime with their constitutional right is now a cumbersome, paper-intensive process. Our deputies literally hand crime victims a paper form developed by the Ohio Attorney General's office (see copy of this form included with this testimony) that lists out their rights along with other resources and services available to them. There has to be a better way!

Well, there is. Through technological improvements we now have the ability to comply with Marcy's Law through electronic means using text or email. Just think, every day we get text and email reminders of upcoming medical and dental appointments, whether an upcoming flight is on time or delayed and the status of orders placed with online retailers. We can and should bring this same technology to law enforcement to automate the notices we are required by law to send to crime victims.

We are already part way there. The Stark County Sheriff's office, along with most of the other 87 county sheriffs who operate jails, already utilize V.I.N.E (Victim Information Notification Everyday) to provides automatic notices to crime victims regarding the status of their offender. Whenever an incarcerated individual registered with V.I.N.E. is about to be bailed out, moved to another facility or set for release victims can now be instantly notified by email or text

message. Thanks to a contract through the Ohio Attorney General's office all 88 counties and the Ohio Department of Rehabilitation and Correction is linked with V.I.N.E.

As Stark County Sheriff, I see the value in expanding V.I.N.E. to ensure victims of crime receive notices about the status of their case earlier in the process. Our officers and detectives could save a lot of man hours by having the ability to automatically push out notices to crime victims whenever there is an update in the investigation of a criminal matter. The best part of this system is it interfaces with our existing dispatch and records management systems so anytime there is an update to the case file, an alert automatically goes out to the victim. Our deputies and detectives do not need to do anything different than they do now. The communication flow will be seamless and automatic.

I urge the Ohio Senate to invest \$4.5 million in a pilot program to expand V.I.N.E. so that crime victims receive automatic updates regarding the status of an ongoing criminal investigation. This \$4.5 million would be added to the existing Attorney General's Victims of Crime line (appropriation item 055441) in the current version of HB 96. We are grateful to Senator Theresa Gavarone of Bowling Green for her leadership on this issue. Her office is drafting and submitting the amendment to provide the funding necessary to expand, on a pilot basis, automated crime victim notifications. Thank you for your time and consideration.