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**Senate Judiciary Committee
Proponent Testimony for S.B. 204
November 19, 2025**

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Senior Director of Survivor Services
Ohio Domestic Violence Network

Chair Manning, Vice Chair Reynolds, Ranking Member Hicks-Hudson, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee:

My name is Alicia Williamson, and I am the Senior Director of Survivor Services at the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. Thank you for the opportunity to provide support for S.B. 204.

ODVN's 76 local programs work every single day with survivors who are fighting to rebuild their lives, only to discover that an eviction filing can be the difference between safety and danger. For too many families, one line on a court docket becomes a locked door, another night in crisis, or the loss of a chance to finally live free from abuse.

For survivors, an eviction filing is often the result of an abuser's actions or the chaos of fleeing, yet that filing can follow them for years through tenant screening systems. A recent national report found that while renters make up only 32 percent of the population, they experience 56 percent of all violent victimizations. The same report shows that 43 percent of people who were recently evicted were also victims of violence.

Even when survivors win their eviction cases, the record of the filing can still block them from accessing new housing. The report is clear: housing protections are essential to safety and stability, and it explicitly recommends that states "develop systems to seal eviction records for victims of violence."¹

S.B. 204 offers a simple, common-sense solution. It would require eviction records to be hidden from the public as soon as a case is filed. The court and the people involved can still see the case, but it would not show up in public searches.

¹ The Keys to Safety: Why Housing Protections Increase Safety for All. 2024. Available from <https://asj.allianceforsafetyandjustice.org/wp-content/uploads/2025/01/Keys-To-Safety.pdf>



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If the landlord wins the case, the record becomes public unless both sides agree it should stay hidden. If the tenant wins or the case is dismissed, the record stays hidden. And while a record is hidden, the court cannot post the names of the tenant or landlord online. This approach follows national best practices, which recommend keeping eviction cases private unless a landlord ultimately proves their case, especially when tenants are survivors of violence.

On behalf of ODVN and our member programs across the state, thank you, Senator Reynolds, for sponsoring S.B. 204 and helping to remove structural barriers that prevent survivors of domestic violence from securing safe, stable housing.