Chairman, Vice Chair, Ranking Member, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee,
Thank you for allowing me to testify today in support of Senate Bill 421

I want to talk to you about time.
Not the kind of time survivors need to heal — you've heard that. I want to talk about the time limit Ohio law gives a survivor to file a civil claim against the person who harmed them.

Twelve months.
Ohio gives survivors of sexual assault one year to initiate a civil lawsuit. Not one year from when they feel ready. Not one year from when a related investigation concludes. One year from the date of the assault itself, when a survivor is often in the deepest, most disorienting fog of their life.

I know, because the clock ran out on me.

While I was waiting for the medical board to complete their investigation — a process that took over three years — Ohio's civil statute of limitations expired. An investigation I had no control over. A timeline set by an institution, not by me. And when that investigation ended, my window to civil court had been closed for two years.
I did not miss the deadline because I was not paying attention. I missed it because the system was on its own schedule while my rights quietly expired.
That is not justice.

Let me give you some context, because I think this committee deserves to understand where Ohio stands. Across the country, Tennessee and Ohio are the only two states that give survivors a single year to file. Louisiana provides two. Mississippi allows three. Texas extends to five. Michigan reaches ten. Senate Bill 421 asks Ohio to reach five years — to simply get into the same range as states we don't typically look to for progressive policy.

We need to be better than this.

Here is what that one-year window does not account for. It does not account for the months many survivors spend, not yet able to name what happened to them. It does not account for fear of retribution, fear of not being believed, or the very rational fear that coming forward will cost more than it returns. It does not account for parallel processes — criminal investigations, licensing board reviews, institutional inquiries —

that can take years and that survivors are often advised to allow to run their course before pursuing civil action.

The civil court is, in many cases, the only venue where a survivor can seek direct accountability. Criminal prosecution requires proof beyond a reasonable doubt, and many cases — especially those involving assault by someone in a position of trust — never reach that threshold. The civil standard is lower. It asks whether the evidence tips the scales, not whether it eliminates all doubt. For survivors whose cases will never see a criminal conviction, civil court may be the only door.

Ohio is nailing that door shut after twelve months.

Senate Bill 421 does not manufacture cases that don't exist. It does not lower the burden of proof. It does not change who can be sued or what must be shown. It simply extends the window to five years, giving survivors a realistic opportunity to use it.

I am asking you to pass this bill because what happened to me should not be a cautionary tale about reading the fine print on your own victimization. No survivor should lose their legal options to an investigation they did not initiate and could not control.

Five years is not radical. Five years is reasonable. Five years is the minimum we owe to people who were harmed, who told the truth, and who deserve the chance to stand before a court of law and have their story heard.

Please pass Senate Bill 421.
Thank you.