OHIOHEALTH
SARNCO
Sexual Assault Response Network of Central Ohio

May 19, 2026

Re: Written Statement in Support of Ohio Senate Bill 421
Submitted by Terra Purdy, Manager, OhioHealth Sexual Violence Services

As the Manager of OhioHealth Sexual Violence Services, I oversee a comprehensive program that provides 24/7 advocacy, forensic nursing, hospital accompaniment, crisis intervention, and long-term support to survivors of sexual violence throughout Ohio. Every day, my team and I witness the profound courage it takes for survivors to come forward, and the significant barriers that often delay their ability to seek justice. For these reasons, I am expressing strong support for Ohio Senate Bill 421, bipartisan legislation that would extend the civil statute of limitations for sex offenses from one year to five years. This change is essential to ensure that Ohio's legal framework reflects what we know about trauma, healing, and the realities of sexual violence.

Survivors frequently need far more than one year to process what happened to them, secure safety, stabilize their lives, and reach a point where pursuing civil action is possible. Trauma responses such as delayed reporting, fear of retaliation, shame, and fragmented memory are not signs of reluctance. These reactions are predictable, well-documented impacts of sexual violence. A one-year civil statute of limitations effectively shuts the courthouse doors on many survivors before they have even begun to heal.

Ohio's data underscores the urgency of this legislation. Ohio's Office of Criminal Justice (2026) shows over 3,900 rapes were reported throughout the state in 2025. That number is just the tip of the iceberg. According to the United States Justice Department, roughly 80% of rapes and sexual assaults go unreported (Morgan et al., 2018). When survivors do come forward, they deserve a system that honors their timeline and not one that penalizes them for the very trauma they endured.

SB 421 is a practical, bipartisan, trauma-informed reform. It aligns Ohio with national trends toward modernizing statutes of limitations and acknowledges the lived experiences of survivors. Extending the civil

window to five years provides a more realistic and compassionate opportunity for survivors to seek accountability and pursue justice on their own terms.

On behalf of OhioHealth Sexual Violence Services, and in solidarity with the survivors we serve, I urge the Ohio General Assembly to pass Senate Bill 421. This legislation represents a meaningful step toward a more just, survivor-centered Ohio.

Sincerely,

Terra L. Purdy, MS
Manager
OhioHealth Sexual Violence Services

References

Morgan, R., Kena, G., & Statisticians, B. (2018). *Criminal victimization, 2016: Revised*. https://bjs.ojp.gov/content/pub/pdf/cv16.pdf
Ohio Office of Criminal Justice Services. (2024). *Sexual assault in Ohio*. Ohio.gov. https://ocjs.ohio.gov/research-and-data/data-reports-and-dashboards/sexual-assault-in-ohio