

November 19, 2020

Chairman Lang, Vice Chair Plummer and members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:

My name is Brenda Glass, I am a licensed clinical social worker with a background in chemical dependency counseling. I am the founder and executive director of the Brenda Glass Trauma Center. Our mission is to provide comprehensive outreach, case management, peer support and mental health services to underserved, hard to reach victims of violent crime. I stand before you to express my support of Senate Bill 3. I support SB3 because of how transformative it is for crime survivors who need better access to treatment and services to help them recover, not more barriers.

In collaboration with the Alliance for Safety and Justice in 2017, the Ohio Attorney General's office launched the Ohio Trauma Recovery Center System of care to support underserved victims of crime. I am honored to have been one of the first Trauma Recovery Center directors in the state of Ohio.

The types of trauma that we treat are the result of domestic violence, sexual assault and other physical assaults, criminal motor vehicle accidents, community-related violence, and losing a loved one to homicide. The trauma recovery center model acknowledges that trauma can have a devastating impact on people at an emotional, physical, spiritual, and financial level, and our staff is dedicated to helping people heal from violence in all these areas.

When people experience trauma, it can result in exaggerated startle response, PTSD, anxiety, depression, anxiety, loss of sleep, panic attacks, anger, hyper-awareness, isolation, insomnia and sleep disturbances. Crime victims often describe feeling "out of sorts" and guilty because they feel that they should have been able to do something to prevent their victimization. Consequently, they develop a distorted and negative view of themselves.

Given all the various ways that people respond to trauma, it's no surprise that unaddressed trauma can lead to substance use. Many of the crime victims I work with have experienced prior trauma and received little-to-no support. Unaddressed trauma and addiction too often go hand-in-hand. Without the proper support, many crime victims turn to substances to numb their trauma and feelings of pain. As a result many crime victims have felonies of drug possession. These felonies often make life more difficult for a person who is already dealing with trauma.

Healing after victimization is complex; barriers to support and services add to the complexities and further interfere with recovery.

Too many times, I have been in the unfortunate situation of informing crime victims that they are ineligible for programming or housing due to a prior conviction.

I worked with one woman who was a survivor of child sexual abuse and domestic violence. Like many she turned to drugs to numb the pain of violence. She came to me after she became the victim of gun violence. This woman was a mother and a State Tested Nursing Assistant in Ohio. Due to complications related to the shooting, she was unable to walk and consequently

unable to work. She suffered terrible anxiety, exaggerated startle response and PTSD. She also had a 7-year-old felony for drug possession. That felony made it more challenging for me to help her access the support she needed.

In another instance, I worked with a man who was a victim of assault as a child. He was referred to me after becoming the victim of gun violence. He was shot while in his vehicle talking on the phone after work. He worked in manufacturing, but following the shooting he was unable to return to work because he also couldn't walk. His inability to walk, work and support his child/children led to depression and anxiety. He too had an eight-year-old conviction for drug possession which made it challenging for me to help him.

Crime victims often experience mental health challenges, substance abuse, housing instability, disruption in employment, re-victimization and contact with the justice system. Many turn to substances to cope with trauma often because support was not available or offered to them.

Crime victims need support. Left without support many will attempt to numb their pain which can lead to addiction and felony convictions when all they needed was help. Felony convictions associated with addiction are often rooted in a prior harmful experience, responding with felonies only adds barriers and humiliation to their lives. Old criminal convictions are used to box people in; for victims of crime who also have prior convictions, they are used to deny support.

I support SB 3 and urge you to pass it into law because I know that people who are battling addiction have often been left with little support before they ever turned to drugs.

Thank you for the opportunity to weigh in. I am happy to answer any questions you may have.

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