

## TESTIMONY IN SUPPORT OF SB146

**To amend sections 2919.25, 2929.13 and 2929.14 of the Revised Code to expand the offense of domestic violence to also prohibit a person from knowingly impeding the normal breathing or circulation of the blood of a family or household member by applying pressure to the family or household member's throat or neck or blocking the family or household member's throat or neck or blocking the family or household member's nose or mouth.**

**Sponsors: Senator Kunze, Senator Antonio**

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chairman Manning, Ranking Minority Member Thomas, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to submit written testimony in support of Senate Bill 146.

I have been practicing law for over twenty-five years. I am the managing partner in a woman owned firm with eight lawyers in Canton, Ohio. Over the course of the last five years, I have represented numerous women who have been charged with high end felonies as a result of fighting back against their abusers. The charges have been murder, attempted murder, felonious assault and domestic violence related crimes. I have worked very closely with the Domestic Violence Network in Stark County and spoke on domestic violence in our community. Most of the women who I have represented have experienced strangulation by their abuser as a matter of regular occurrence in their relationships. The very first woman who I represented on a murder charge had been strangled by her spouse to the point of passing out. Many others have described to me that the strangulation debilitated them so they could not fend off their partner from further assaults. Strangulation is a predictor sign of those abusers who will kill their intimate partners. These dangerous actions are most often performed when a woman announces that she desires to leave the relationship. The abuser feels out of control and the violence is at an all time high.

Many of these women develop PTSD over time experiencing cycles of abuse and apology. We must develop a zero tolerance to this abuse in our society and in the State of Ohio. Our message needs to be clear that the abuse will not be tolerated and we need to encourage battered individuals to speak up and seek shelter and the law before their life is taken or they are forced to take the life of another. If they take the life of another, then they will endure a very long road of legal channels to exoneration if they are lucky, or they will face a remainder of their life in jail. Neither is easy and neither is fair. The legal channels involve reliving the abuse and trauma in front of a jury who judge their behavior with a hindsight view as opposed to fully

understanding the fish bowl of manipulation they have lived in for years. So many times the abused partner endures the emotional and physical abuse to save their children from poverty as the abuse almost always involve financial control.

Strangulation needs to be recognized as a criminal offense under our domestic violence statute. It is happening to individuals all across our state and unless we take it serious and hold those accountable for their actions, then it will continue to happen and lives will continue to be destroyed. It is shocking that we have not amended our statute yet and recognized this act of terror as a crime.

It may seem odd for the committee to hear from a criminal defense lawyer encouraging the passage of this Bill, but I have seen first hand the results of strangulation and society's ignorance of its prediction of ruined lives. I respectfully ask this committee to pass this Bill to protect those victims who we need to protect as our civil and moral duty in this great State of Ohio.

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