

**Testimony in Support of SB146**  
**To amend domestic violence law by means of firearms restrictions, penalty**  
**enhancements, and a prohibition against strangulation, and to make an appropriation**  
**Sponsors: Senator Kunze, Senator Antonio**

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 146, legislation that would 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 nose or mouth. I have been a registered nurse for 22 years and spent the last 7 years as a sexual assault nurse examiner. My job was to provide nursing care for those who have sexually assaulted or raped and many of my patients have experienced being strangled by their assailant. I'm writing today because I feel the passage of this legislation is a matter of life and death for individuals whose offenders use strangulation to gain power and control. Strangulation victims are seven times more likely to die at the hands of these offenders, usually with a firearm or knife. According to Ohio coroner records, there have been 15 homicides involving strangulation in our state in the past 5 years. I realize this number isn't an alarming number of deaths, however it supports research that these victims are dying by means of a weapon, not strangulation. Strangulation is a means of power and control, used to scare victims. Currently, Ohio law is on the offenders' side. It's a lucrative business for them because they're getting away with rendering victims unconscious in a matter of seconds and near death shortly thereafter. Often, offenders are charged with misdemeanor domestic violence and receive little or no jail time. This

sends a clear message to strangulation victims that the offender does, in fact, have great control and gets away with such a frightening and dangerous act.

Non-fatal strangulation and suffocation present unique challenges and health risks. Patients commonly report pain with swallowing, voice changes, and headache, which are not symptoms we usually associate with life-threatening injuries or serious physical harm. But there are hidden dangers of strangulation and suffocation beneath the skin that may not perpetuate until days, months, or years later, including brain injury, seizures, swelling of the airway, stroke, rupture of arteries or veins in the neck due to weakening, heart arrhythmias, swelling and fluid in the lungs, and organ failure. We know that patients who report urinating or defecating on themselves during the strangulation event were near death because they started to lose control of their bodily functions. They don't always offer this information to law enforcement because they are embarrassed. These victims also experience emotional trauma from being strangled or suffocated that can last a lifetime. Patients often report to me that they thought they were going to die and thought about their children as their assailant strangled them.

These attacks are violent. Strangulation victims lose consciousness after 6-10 seconds and die if the event lasts just several minutes. Victims who regain consciousness report feeling dazed and confused and their memory is often affected. There is usually little or no visible external injury with strangulation, but the hidden dangers are immense.

This revision of Ohio's domestic violence law is vital. Strangulation and suffocation are serious crimes worthy of serious punishment and it's time for Ohio law to reflect that. The stories of countless victims who survive these attacks are testaments

to how vitally important it is to pass SB146. I commend those who have come forward to tell their stories, advocating for the passage of this legislation. It shows a level of bravery and courage unlike anything I've ever seen. This amendment to the domestic violence law will save lives and send a clear message to offenders that they will not get away with the violent act of strangling or suffocating someone.

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