

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 Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to testify in support of Senate Bill 146. This legislation has the potential to positively influence the culture surrounding domestic violence strangulation in Ohio and ultimately help reduce domestic violence strangulation within our communities.

I am a survivor of domestic violence. My ex-husband used many forms of intimidation during our 9-year relationship, from mental abuse, physical abuse, strangulation, and sexual assault. Tolerating this was something "I owed him". The last time I saw him was February 27, 2017. He strangled me with his belt to the point of unconsciousness numerous times, broke a bone in my cheek, broke my nose, and ended his torture with sexual assault. In my case the evidence was overwhelming and the attack brutal enough a conviction was inevitable. Unfortunately, in so many cases it is not.

Strangulation is an extreme form of control. I have never felt such fear in my life as I did the night my husband strangled me. He was in complete control, something he always wanted, my life was in his hands. I was very fortunate to escape that evening many women lose their lives to men like my ex. One person should not have this much power over another human being. When a person loses this much self-control over another human being there need to be consequences.

The passing of SB 146 is important because a victim of a violent crime needs to have a sense of comfort the law is on their side. Many victims do not cooperate with law enforcement and prosecutors due to fear of the assailant, lack of support, and confusion. They can also be manipulated by their significant other after the strangulation occurs. It is an extremely hard decision to leave the assailant. By the time the events happen, the mental abuse and manipulation has already taken its toll on the victim. I stayed with my ex-husband out of fear. When finally decided I had enough and would leave, he would manage to find me and manipulate me into coming back.

The court process can be very frustrating and disheartening. There are laws to protect the accused for them to receive a fair trial. The same is not true for victims. I did not know how the judicial system worked. I thought once he was arrested in early March, he would remain in jail until his court date. He was granted a bond reduction and was released in early May. Living life in fear for months up until the trial is no way for a victim to live. From having to look over my shoulder every time I opened the garage door to glancing both ways as I walked out of work before stepping through the door, there was constant anxiety. The one thing that helped me sleep better was knowing his trial was set at the end of May. I did not realize it could be continued, continued numerous times until the final court date of December 22. During these seven months while he was free leading up to the trial there was nothing protecting me from him. I had a protection order, but it does not guarantee anything. This man had already broken me, broken the law, what was stopping him from doing this again?

There are too many stories of strangulation where the assailant receives a light sentence and the story of the victim ends in murder. The law needs to prevent this and

the passing of SB 146 is a great starting point. Strangulation is a cruel and extreme form of abuse. Survivors can suffer consequences from that night for many years to come and in some cases the rest of their lives, the abuser should suffer the same.

Angelia Miller, Survivor

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