



1855 E. Dublin-Granville Road, Suite 301  
Columbus, Ohio 43229  
Phone: 614-781-9651

Mary O'Doherty, Executive Director  
Ohio Domestic Violence Network  
Senate Bill 162, Senate Judiciary Committee  
Feb. 17, 2020

### **Written Testimony in Support of SB 162**

Chairman Eklund, Vice Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judicial Committee, my name is Mary O'Doherty and I am the Executive Director of the Ohio Domestic Violence Network. I am here today representing 72 local domestic violence organizations across the state. Together we strive to provide comprehensive, trauma-informed services to survivors of domestic violence and their children. On an average day in Ohio, our programs serve almost 2,000 survivors and provide emergency shelter to more than 700 survivors. Last year our programs served more than 70,000 survivors and their children.

Based on our direct service and support of direct service providers across the state of Ohio, we support Senate Bill 162.

According to a national Institute of Justice report, 40-45% of women in abusive relationships are sexually assaulted by their abusive partner, over half of those women were sexually assaulted multiple times. This form of intimate partner sexual assault is more likely to cause physical injury than sexual assault perpetrated by non-intimate partners. Women who are sexually assaulted by their violent partner are at a greater risk for homicide. Despite this reality, married women in Ohio have less legal protection from rape than unmarried women. SB 162 removes the spousal rape exceptions so that all victims of rape and sex offenses in Ohio have equal access to the law regardless of marital status.

1 in 9 girls and 1 in 53 boys under the age of 18 experience sexual abuse or assault at the hands of an adult. According to the US Department of Health and Human Services, 80% of those perpetrators are parents, 6% are relatives, and 4% are unmarried partners of a parent.

Survivors of child sexual abuse experience mental and physical health problems at much higher rates than their non-victimized peers. Women who are sexually abused by intimate partners suffer higher rates of depression than those who are sexually assaulted by a non-intimate partner or who are physically but not sexually abused by their intimate partner.



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It understandably takes time for these survivors to come forward and tell others what happened. It takes time – and sometimes healing and treatment – to be able to endure a civil or criminal trial as a victim of a sex offense. SB 162 recognizes that for victims of sex crimes - especially those perpetrated by someone so close to the victim – the statute of limitations must be removed for the justice system to be meaningfully available.

Our domestic violence programs across the state work with victims of sexual assault every day. It is for these adult and child victims that we welcome and support measures like SB 162 that remove barriers to achieve an oppression and violence free life.