

YWCA IS ON A MISSION

Victims of intimate-partner sexual violence often choose coping or survival strategies that appease the abuser, rather than fighting unwanted sexual advances, to avoid physical, emotional, or financial consequences. This is particularly prevalent in marriages where women are victimized by other forms of domestic violence, as there often does not need to be an explicit threat of force for a victim to feel like she can't say no. A woman may believe that if she resisted, she could be hurt more severely, that resistance would prolong the assault, that appeasement would protect her children, that unless she was ready to leave, she would have to face the perpetrator again, that she should "keep the peace," or that she was somehow deserving of the assault. It is also common for victims in these situations to struggle to identify the act as rape.

Senate Bill 162 empowers survivors with the language and the legal options to face marital sexual abuse. The passage of this legislation will allow Ohio to overcome harmful and antiquated norms regarding a woman's ownership of her own body and allow married survivors to have the same protections from sexual assault as unmarried ones. Ohio is one of only eight states with an exemption that treats certain encounters between spouses differently than if two people were unmarried.

As with marital rape, Ohio is lagging behind the more than half of the other states who have already eliminated the statute of limitations for rape, an arbitrary length of time during which a victim is able to report their rape and receive justice. By passing Senate Bill 162, the legislature would join in eliminating this barrier to justice and ensuring that rapists never evade legal consequences simply because an arbitrary time limit has expired.

One in five women will be raped at some point in their life. Even with the alarming prevalence of sexual assaults, the trauma of sexual violence remains a source of shame and guilt for those who survive. As the only Rape Crisis Center serving Montgomery and Preble Counties, YWCA Dayton understands how the physical, emotional, and psychological effects of sexual violence can influence how and when a victim reports a crime.

"The statute of limitations for rape has historically served to balance maintaining the public's safety while protecting defendants' rights in the criminal justice process. However, with a society that has recently begun to dissect the stigma, shame, intimidation, and trauma that often keeps survivors from coming forward, the statute of limitations is another unnecessary hurdle through an already arduous legal process. Eliminating the statute of limitations for rape is a clear message to every rape and sexual assault survivor that they have a voice and no matter how much time has passed until they are finally ready, their justice is important."- Megan Garrison, YWCA Sexual Assault Educator

Senate Bill 162 is a critical piece of legislation that empowers survivors by allowing them to speak their truths and be heard. Every day, YWCA supports, serves, and stands alongside survivors. It's time our state did the same.

Thank you for the opportunity to present testimony on this important issue. If you have any questions, or would like any additional information, please do not hesitate to contact me by email at swolliknight@ywcadayton.org or by phone at (937) 461-5550 x109.



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