

Proponent Testimony for House Bill 3
To address making changes to civil and criminal law regarding domestic violence, strangulation, address State Highway Patrol arrest authority/lethality assessments, name the act Aisha's Law, and to make an appropriation

Sponsors: Representative Boyd and Representative Carruthers

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Criminal Justice Committee, I appreciate you giving myself the opportunity to testify in support of House Bill 3, a piece of legislation that would amend sections 109.744, 109.803, 2903.01, 2919.25, 2919.27, 2929.12, 2929.13, 2929.14, 2929.22, 2935.03, 2935.032, 2937.23 and 3113.31; to amend, for the purpose of adopting a new section number as indicated in parenthesis, section 2935.033 (2935.034); and to enact new section 2935.033 and section 2919.261 of the Revised Code to make changes to civil and criminal law regarding domestic violence.

These pieces of legislation are important to me not only on a personal level as someone who's witnessed violence firsthand, but also as an advocate who works with the people these laws would directly benefit.

As a survivor advocate with the Battered Women's Shelter of Summit and Medina counties, I have clients that come into my office that need this to become a law. I have worked within our agency for 3 years in multiple disciplinaries, but no matter where I am in this agency, I encounter many survivors that have come through my door questioning why and seeking justice. They ask me why their abusers continue to live in their homes, fearlessly go to their jobs, and remain active on social media, while they, the *victims*, are in a shelter fleeing these abusers, fearful to go to their homes and their jobs, and are unable to continue their regular social lives. I tell them the truth - they didn't receive the justice they deserved when calling authorities or when they have pressed charges. Numerous clients have fled dangerous situations and answer yes to every question on the lethality assessment that points to being killed by their abuser if they go back, and yet, by law, their injuries are not deemed substantial enough for a case to be brought in front of a judge and for the abusers to be held accountable.

As a child that witnessed the violence these laws address, I beg that it becomes a law. Aisha's story was my biggest fear. My mother had no choice but to be at home with her abuser while I was at school, and I was constantly terrified that I would come home to find her dead. Thankfully, my story ended with my mom

getting away from her abuser, but how many children in this state have had that same worry? How many have had their fears actualized? How many mothers are terrified to drop their children off to their abuser because they are still their parent, not knowing if their fate would be the same as Aisha's was, or if their children would be taken from them?

My heart as a survivor aches for Aisha's children, and my advocacy fire burns brighter than ever before because we *need* a state where survivors feel heard no matter what status of power their abuser holds. We need laws that protect our survivors.

I challenge you to put yourself in the survivors' shoes that walk into our doors every single day, fearful and fleeing. Put yourself in their shoes as they walk into my office like a deer in the headlights, not knowing what their next step will be. Put yourself in their shoes as they weigh the pros and cons of going back to their abuser in the hopes that, "this time is different," and, "they will change," and love them better. Statistics show that, on average, it takes a survivor 7 to 8 times for them to get out of an abusive relationship. 7 to 8 times. Could you put yourself in their shoes 7-8 times? This could be more, or this could be less, but how many of those times that they try to leave are they met with even more obstacles from our legislation that it is just easier to stay? With this, I urge you, please, be the voice for survivors that aren't able to use theirs and pass House Bill 3 which would enact Aisha's Law. I appreciate the time you take to review my testimony.

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