

Chairman LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and Members of the House Criminal Justice Committee:

Thank you for allowing me to present sponsor testimony today on HB 406, to make changes to the offense of voyeurism.

It is unfortunate that this legislation needed. However, it is important that we take the steps to protect the privacy of Ohioans when it is at risk. We expect privacy in our lives, especially in places like locker rooms, changing rooms, or bathrooms. Far too often, these private places are interrupted by predators trying to take pictures or videos of people without their knowledge. They try to take photos of them while they are undressed and God knows what they will do with those images.

This unfortunately happened to a young woman from my district. While she was in a changing room, she saw a phone trying to photos of her. After the phone disappeared, she left the room and called her mother scared. She then called 9-1-1. The man was caught. However, when it came to trying to charge him, the prosecution could only get him on public indecency, and not voyeurism which this was clearly an incident of. The victim was partially clothed – she was taking her blouse off – and the photos were taken from above, and not below. The technicalities of current law meant that the perpetrator didn't fit into any category of voyeurism for committing these horrible acts. This needs to change.

H.B. 406 is a step in the right direction to fix Ohio's laws and ensure that we do a better job of keep offenders off the streets. First, this legislation get rids of "sexual gratification" clause in two sections of the ORC. By doing so, prosecutors no longer need to prove that someone is using photos for sexual gratification; rather, the very act of committing the crime is enough to be charged. Second, the bill updates the law to include modern forms of videography and photography to include streaming and broadcasting. Finally, this bill increases penalties for voyeurism offenses. The penalties for first time offenses involving a minor and repeat offenses are steeper. By doing so, we can keep offenders off the streets.

Mr. Chairman, I believe this legislation is very much needed in Ohio. We cannot sit idly by and allow criminals to invade the privacy that we expect. We must ensure that law is strong enough to do what it is supposed to do. I encourage you to support this bill and get it to the House floor as soon as possible.

Thank you.