



*Testimony in Support of SB90
To address high-risk domestic violence and victimization
Sponsors: Senator Stephanie Kunze and Senator Nickie Antonio*

Chairman Manning, Vice Chair McColley, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Judiciary Committee, on behalf of the Ohio Chapter of the International Association of Forensic Nurses, we are calling for support of Senate Bill 90, legislation that would 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 nose or mouth.

The International Association of Forensic Nurses is an international membership organization comprised of forensic nurses working around the world and other professionals who support and complement the work of forensic nursing. The IAFN consists of over 5,000 members with 263 located in Ohio. Forensic nurses are Registered or Advanced Practice nurses who have received specific education and training. Forensic nurses provide specialized care for patients who are experiencing acute and long-term health consequences associated with victimization or violence, and/or have unmet evidentiary needs relative to having been victimized or accused of victimization.

A primary goal of forensic nursing programs is to raise public awareness that violence is a public health issue that impacts healthcare systems and communities worldwide. To that end, forensic nurses promote interventions that prevent or confront the causes of violence and strengthen the health care response to those affected by violence.^{1 2 3}

Strangulation has been identified as one of the most lethal forms of domestic violence. Forensic nursing programs across Ohio have nurses on call 24/7 to perform a medical forensic exam when survivors of strangulation report to law enforcement, advocates or come to the hospital for treatment. Survivors of

¹ American Nurses Association [ANA] and International Association of Forensic Nurses [IAFN]. (2017). Forensic nursing: Scope and standards of practice 2nd Edition. ANA and IAFN.

² American Nurses Association [ANA]. (2015). American nurses association code of ethics with interpretive statements. ANA.

³ International Association of Forensic Nurses [IAFN]. (2008). IAFN vision of ethical practice. IAFN.



strangulation often present with the following signs or symptoms: pain, hoarseness, difficulty swallowing, bruising and abrasions, ringing in the ears, dizziness, drooling, difficulty breathing, nausea and vomiting, incontinence, seizures, loss of memory, confusion, agitation and associated traumatic brain injuries. It is imperative for anyone who has been strangled to receive medical treatment because often there may be no outward sign of serious injury. Internal injuries can cause swelling, difficulty breathing, and even a stroke.⁴ Strangulation alone is life-threatening in the moment, but may also result in delayed death due to trachea fracture or carotid artery dissection.⁵ Domestic violence is a healthcare issue that destroys the quality of life of the individuals who are experiencing it. The aftermath of violence creates complex health issues requiring the dedicated efforts of multidisciplinary professionals. Nursing professionals are ethically bound to promote health, welfare, and safety of all people.⁶ ⁷Using the science of nursing, forensic science and public health, forensic nurses are uniquely qualified to assess, formulate a nursing diagnosis treat, monitor, educate, evaluate, and intervene for persons of all ages affected by violence, minimizing the short and long-term effects of violence.⁸ A primary goal of Healthy People 2020 is to prevent unintentional injuries and violence, and reduce their consequences.⁹ Substantial research is still needed to learn the immediate as well as long term consequences of strangulation and traumatic brain injury (TBI).

Laws in Ohio currently do not support domestic violence survivors who have been strangled. Offenders are likely to receive little to no punishment when charged with a misdemeanor for strangling their victim, which increases the lethality level for survivors. "Strangulation is, in fact, one of the best predictors for the subsequent homicide of victims of domestic violence. One study showed that the odds of becoming an attempted homicide victim increased by 700 percent, and the odds of becoming a homicide victim increased by 800 percent for women who had been strangled by their partner."¹⁰ Ohioans are in need of help to modify current laws that reflect the seriousness of non-fatal strangulation. These amendments and additions to the domestic violence law will likely save lives and begin to hold offenders accountable.

⁴ Plattner, T., Bolliger, S., & Zollinger, U. (2005). Forensic assessment of survived strangulation. *Forensic Science International*, 153(2-3):202-7.

⁵ Blanco Pampin, J., Morte Tamayo, N., Hinojal Fonseca, R., Payne-James, J. J., & Jerreat, P. (2002). Delayed presentation of carotid dissection, cerebral ischemia, and infarction following blunt trauma: Two cases. *Journal of Clinical Forensic Medicine*, 9(3), 136–140.

⁶ American Nurses Association [ANA]. (2015). American nurse's association code of ethics with interpretive statements. ANA.

⁷ International Association of Forensic Nurses [IAFN]. (2008). IAFN vision of ethical practice. IAFN.

⁸ American Nurses Association [ANA] and International Association of Forensic Nurses [IAFN]. (2017). *Forensic nursing: Scope and standards of practice 2nd Edition*. ANA and IAFN.

⁹ [Healthypeople.gov](https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/injury-and-violence-prevention). (2020). Injury and violence prevention. Office of Disease Prevention and Health Promotion. <https://www.healthypeople.gov/2020/topics-objectives/topic/injury-and-violence-prevention>

¹⁰ Nancy Glass et al. (2008). Non-fatal strangulation is an important risk factor for homicide of women. *Journal of Emergency Medicine*, 35, 329.



The Ohio Chapter of the International Association of Forensic Nurses is thankful to the sponsors, Senators Kunze and Antonio. We are grateful that they have recognized that it is time that Ohio joins the 48 other states in the country that have recognized the seriousness of non-fatal strangulation and the long-term effects on survivors of domestic violence.

The Ohio Chapter of the International Association of Forensic Nurses expresses its support for the passage of SB90. We would be happy to answer any questions you may have.

International Association of Forensic Nurses -- Ohio Chapter
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