



MIKE DEWINE

★ OHIO ATTORNEY GENERAL ★

Administration
30 E. Broad St., 17th Floor
Columbus, OH 43215
614-728-5458
www.OhioAttorneyGeneral.gov

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The Honorable Nathan Manning
Chairman, House Criminal Justice Committee
77 South High Street, 12th Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Manning,

Thank you for the opportunity to address an important piece of legislation before the House Criminal Justice Committee. House Bill 327, sponsored by Representatives Schaffer and Smith, creates a necessary tool for law enforcement to protect Ohio's youth from sexual predators conspiring behind the glare of a computer screen.

While the world benefits greatly from technological advancements, there is, without a doubt, the need to ensure this new era is safe for our most vulnerable populations, especially our children. Far too often, ill-intentioned adults seek and communicate with youth through online forums intending to prey on their vulnerability. That is why I created the Attorney General's Crimes Against Children Unit in 2011 at BCI to focus on identifying, arresting and convicting these people who prey on kids. This unit has expertise in undercover online chat, peer-to-peer file sharing, forensic analysis of computers and other technology, and sex offender warrant enforcement. Last year, our unit investigated 161 cases, assisting 98 different law enforcement agencies in 47 counties in Ohio.

House Bill 327 seeks to increase the penalty for certain first offense importuning violations. Ohio must show that this type of behavior is not only unacceptable in our state, but that it also will be punished in a meaningful way. I support House Bill 327 and ask the Committee to favorably report the bill as soon as possible. Thank you.

Very respectfully yours,

Mike DeWine
Ohio Attorney General