

*Barry Linnell*

Chairman Bacon, Vice-Chairman Dolan, Ranking Member Thomas, and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, I am here to provide sponsor testimony on Senate Bill 171.

This needed legislation would increase the penalty for repeat violations of a protection order. Senate Bill 171 aligns the penalties for the offense with those of repeat domestic violence offenders, so that Ohioans who are not a member of an offender's family or who are not living with an offender are better protected. The idea for the legislation came from the Licking County Prosecutor, former Rep. Bill Hayes, and is supported by myself.

Under current law, a repeat offender of a protection order is able to continue menacing the victim who sought the order with little deterrent because the offender is likely to be only given a misdemeanor for the violation. The Prosecutor and I believe that the current law is inadequate and we <sup>could</sup> cite numerous examples of offenders who continue to violate a protection because they know there is no meaningful jail time for the violation. The most tragic example occurred recently at a Kirkersville nursing home when a woman was killed by a man who had repeatedly violated a protection order between the two individuals.

Without the added penalty of the threat of incarceration for the violation of protection orders that Senate Bill 171 brings, I fear that there will be further tragedies like the one that occurred in Kirkersville and that other victims of abuse will face continued threats from people the law ought to protect them from.

Plain and simple: In order to protect innocent Ohioans, the penalty given to repeat offenders of a protection order should be a felony.

For these reasons, I urge your favorable consideration on Senate Bill 171.