



OUR MISSION

To promote access to safety, healing, justice and financial recovery for Ohio crime victims through meaningful rights and quality services.

Ohio Victim Witness Association

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Senate Bill 369
Proponent Testimony
November 18th, 2020

Chairman Eklund, Vice-Chair Manning, Ranking Member Thomas and members of the Senate Judiciary Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide proponent testimony in support of Senate Bill 369 which seeks to modify and expand crime victim compensation.

OVWA is excited to see improvements to ORC 2743.59 as many of these modifications will benefit victims, survivors and their families. We believe that the efforts to protect a victim's privacy, transparency in the finding of fact and decision, and the expansion of who can receive compensation for psychiatric care are just a few of the trauma-informed modifications that will positively shape recovery for many survivors and their families.

What we find most helpful are the provisions seeking to reduce the time period that a victim was convicted of a felony and the inclusion of two other types of victims. In recent data that OVWA has obtained from a landmark needs assessment for homicide survivors, applicants are most commonly denied compensation because the victim has a felony record. This restriction in the existing law serves to further disadvantage the MOST disadvantaged groups in our communities. Victims with felony records are more likely to come from economically challenged neighborhoods where families do not have the financial resources to cover expenses resulting from the death of a loved one and they are also unlikely to have any life insurance coverage or savings to pay for funeral expenses, medical bills, lost wages, etc. The modification to reduce this time period from 10 years to 5 years would no doubt benefit victims, survivors, and families who otherwise would not be eligible for such compensation.

The inclusion of awards to family members who witnessed the crime or arrived at the scene of the crime in the immediate aftermath along with immediate family members who are caretakers of the victim(s) are in line with the expansion of the definition of victim under Marsy's Law, passed in November 2017. Under current law, these survivors/victims are often ineligible for assistance since they themselves were not victimized directly however these determinations are not trauma-informed and do not take into consideration the pervasiveness of crime and trauma within the family unit. Families of homicide victims are often told that they are being denied because they have "sufficient insurance coverage" but find themselves with massive bills correlated to the crime that they cannot pay. Families are also seeing their credit ratings destroyed by the mounting expenses of the homicide of a loved one when they are unable to receive any compensation to help with the bills. These are but a small fraction of barriers to the current compensation system that victims and survivors face daily that SB 369 seeks to improve.



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We believe that SB 369 seeks to reduce many barriers that victims and survivors have long experienced in recovering from crime. Victim compensation is at the very foundation of the crime victim rights movement and while significant changes have been made throughout the decades we still have a long way to go to ensure equitable and accessible compensation for victims, witnesses, and their families. While we believe that SB 369 is working to eliminate some long-standing barriers we hope that this is the first in many steps to improve this system for ALL Ohioans. SB 369 is a step in the right direction for Ohio and we are supportive of the path it is taking. Thank you for this opportunity and your consideration.

Most Respectfully,

Liz Poprocki, MA, RAAS, CA
Executive Director