

# ***TRACY GRINSTEAD-EVERLY, J.D.***

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★ ADVOCACY ★

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## **Written Testimony in Support of HB 3 Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee October 21, 2021**

Thank you, Chair and Members of the Criminal Justice Committee, for advancing HB 3 for a third hearing, and for the opportunity to provide testimony in support of this important legislation.

My name is Tracy Grinstead-Everly. I am an attorney with over 30 years of experience in the field of intimate partner violence, through direct representation of survivors, and decades of legislative advocacy and systems reform.

I also Chair the Family and Sexual Violence Committee of the National Council of Jewish Women, Cleveland Section. NCJW is a grassroots organization of volunteers and advocates who turn progressive ideals into action. Inspired by Jewish values, NCJW strives for social justice by improving the quality of life for women, children, and families and by safeguarding individual rights and freedoms. One of our guiding principles affirms that all individuals have the right to live in a peaceful world, free from violence and persecution. Advancing the well-being and status of women by supporting laws, policies, programs, and services that protect every woman from all forms of abuse, exploitation, harassment, discrimination, and violence is at the core of our work. NCJW helped draft and pass the original Violence Against Women Act (VAWA), the first major federal law dedicated to end domestic violence, sexual assault, and other kinds of intimate partner violence, and has championed all subsequent authorizations thereof. In that spirit, I, personally, and on behalf of NCJW, support Ohio HB 3.

Approximately 1 in 3 adult women and 1 in 10 men experience domestic violence in the United States alone.<sup>1</sup> 1 in 5 homicide victims are murdered by current or former intimate partners.<sup>2</sup> 109 Ohioans died last year as a result of domestic violence,<sup>3</sup> murdered by someone who claimed to love them. Prior to their deaths, many victims suffered in silence,

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<sup>1</sup> Sapkota D, Baird K, Saito A, Anderson D. Interventions for reducing and/or controlling domestic violence among pregnant women in low- and middle-income countries: a systematic review. *Syst Rev.* 2019 Apr 02;8(1):79.

<sup>2</sup> Uniform Crime Report, Federal Bureau of Investigation.

<sup>3</sup> *Ohio Domestic Violence Fatalities, July 1, 2019 - June 30, 2020*, Ohio Domestic Violence Network.

thinking they had no options. Nationally, half of intimate partner homicide victims had received no or minimal support services.<sup>4</sup> It is a travesty that not everyone is aware of lifesaving resources. It is perhaps more horrifying, however, that many took the risks of leaving, turning to established systems designed to protect them, and died anyway. Nationally, 48% of women killed by their intimate partners utilized the criminal justice system for concerns about ongoing intimate partner violence and stalking in the year before their murders.<sup>5</sup> In at least 27% of last year's domestic violence fatalities in Ohio, the victim had ended or was in the process of ending the relationship.<sup>6</sup> At least 20 perpetrators of intimate partner murder in Ohio last year had been previously charged with or convicted of domestic violence.<sup>7</sup> While the murderer bears the ultimate responsibility, systemic failure to prevent these deaths is unacceptable. That is the core principle behind of HB 3 – and why it must be passed.

Decades of research shows us which policy approaches are associated with lower rates of intimate partner homicides. HB 3 helps Ohio join other states in enacting laws and policies that would increase victim safety by requiring law enforcement training and implementing lethality assessment and high-risk response protocols, establish life-saving options such as emergency protection orders, and acknowledging survivors' experiences by adding strangulation and suffocation to state domestic violence crimes. Sentencing enhancements for prior offenses and incorporating screening tools into bail and sentencing considerations promotes victim safety and offender accountability. Reviewing prosecution policies and promoting interdisciplinary cooperation, collaboration, and communication will transform the way agencies and stakeholders understand and respond to domestic violence.

Lethality assessments and more coordinated community responses to domestic violence will allow service providers to identify the most vulnerable and allocate resources accordingly. We know what factors increase risk of lethality. If we can predict domestic violence homicide, we can take actions to prevent it.

The harsh bottom line is this: Our existing response to domestic violence is failing, and people are dying. HB 3 provides an opportunity to implement proven best practice models to make impactful, systemic change to focus our efforts – and save lives.

On behalf of myself, NCJW, and the survivors we support and for whom we advocate, I urge you to pass this bill. Thank you for your time and consideration.

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<sup>4</sup> Campbell, J. C., Webster, D., Koziol-McLain, J., Block, C. R., Campbell, D., Curry, M. A., Gary, F., McFarlane, J., Sachs, C., Sharps, P., Ulrich, Y., & Wilt, S. A. (2003, November). *Assessing Risk Factors for Intimate Partner Homicide*. Washington, DC: National Institute of Justice (NIJ).

<sup>5</sup> Id.

<sup>6</sup> Id.

<sup>7</sup> Id.