



State Representative

Daniel P. Troy

House Criminal Justice Committee: February, 15 2022

Chair LaRe, Vice Chair Swearingen, Ranking Member Leland, and members of the Criminal Justice Committee, I want to thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 419, which aims to protect vulnerable senior citizens from the increasing prevalence of abuse, neglect, and exploitation by closing a loophole within Ohio's mandatory elder abuse reporting laws.

Under current Ohio law, an individual who knowingly fails to report the abuse, neglect, or exploitation of a senior citizen may be fined up to \$500. However, as brought to my attention by the Lake County prosecutor's office, the law provides no guidance or direction for collecting any imposed fines.

Often, this leads to judicial ambiguity and justice being unserved. Our bill improves the current mandatory reporting laws by eliminating confusion and elevating the punishment for failing to report elder abuse to a misdemeanor of the fourth degree, thereby bringing it in line with penalties for failing to report child abuse.

Prior to the pandemic and my return to the General Assembly, I was a member of a collaborative group in Lake County that studied and reported on elder justice issues. And as Ohio's aging population continues to grow, the issue of abuse is becoming more prominent. A recent report from Policy Matters estimated that nearly 214,000 instances of elder abuse occur every year in Ohio; unfortunately, the vast majority go unreported.

As legislators, protecting the health and wellbeing of our citizenry is of the utmost importance. This bill provides an excellent opportunity for members of the Ohio House to demonstrate our commitment to protecting vulnerable seniors and sends a strong message that Ohio will not tolerate elder abuse.

And with that, I want to thank my joint sponsor, Representative Seitz, for being a great partner in this effort, and I'm happy to answer any questions the committee may have.