



Laura Lanese
State Representative, District 23
Beth Liston
State Representative, District 21
Sponsor Testimony for House Bill 41
March 24th, 2021
Senate Health Committee

Chairman Huffman, Vice Chair Antani, Ranking Member Antonio, and members of the Senate Health Committee, thank you for the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony on House Bill 41, which exempts forensic psychologists and mental health evaluation providers from public records requests.

During the 132nd General Assembly, this issue was brought to my attention by one of my constituents, who is a forensic psychologist. She and her colleagues across the state have been threatened by individuals and clients based on their work on our behalf. While they are passionately committed to their jobs and want to ensure that Ohioans are safe, they likewise would like to keep their families safe from disclosure of their private and residential information. While many of their clients are not violent nor do they pose threats, some, in fact, do. And while I was working on this bill during the 132nd GA, the forensic psychologist from the JonBenet Ramsay case was gunned down on the streets of Arizona further emphasizing the dangerous job being a forensic psychologist or mental health evaluation provider can be.

These professions have frequent interactions with criminals and oftentimes their evaluations are the impetus behind the sentencing of an individual. This makes these professionals and their families vulnerable to retaliation. In Ohio, we currently exempt peace officers, prosecutors, judges, and a multitude of other occupations from the public records law. It only makes sense to add forensic psychologists and mental health evaluation providers to the list as they face many, if not more, of the challenges and threats those other occupations pose. We came close to pass this simple, yet important bill during the last General Assembly, but ran out of time. Earlier this month, this bill passed out of the House with a vote of 93-1, and we're hoping the third time is the charm. There have never been any opponents to the legislation. So, we ask for your support in keeping these professionals safer by passing this legislation.

I'll now turn it over to my joint sponsor, Representative Liston before we answer any questions.