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Honorable Nathan Manning, Chairman
Senate Judiciary Committee
1 Capitol Square, Ground Floor
Columbus, Ohio 43215

Dear Chairman Manning,

I write today to express support for House Bill 343, including several amendments that were previously accepted into this legislation. If passed, HB 343 would codify the important crime victims' rights detailed in Marsy's Law.

The Attorney General's Office administers the Crime Victims Compensation program, which assists victims of violent crime in recovering financial losses. Victims may be compensated for medical and counseling expenses, wage loss, replacement services, and funeral expenses. The Crime Victims Section is also responsible for producing the pamphlets concerning victims' rights that law enforcement officials distribute to victims around the state.

HB 343 would codify victims' rights included in Marsy's Law, while also codifying the distribution of the pamphlet to law enforcement. Under the bill, the pamphlet must then be provided to a victim upon their first contact with law enforcement. This ensures that all victims across the state are aware of their rights from the beginning of their interaction with law enforcement.

In addition to these needed provisions, our office also worked closely with Representative White on an important change to unclaimed victims' compensation funds. Currently, if court-ordered victim reparations are unclaimed, those dollars remain tied up with no clear path for disbursement. Under amendment language accepted in the House, unclaimed victims' compensation funds would be transmitted to the Crime Victims Services office, along with the names of the claimants. These funds would be then held for 5 years on behalf of each victim, and then if no individual emerges to claim them, they will automatically revert to the Crime Victims Compensation Fund to be used to assist other victims. Notably, a claimant or family member could still collect those funds at any time.

HB 343 ensures that the victims of violent crime are protected equally across Ohio. I applaud Representative White for her willingness to take on this important piece of legislation. I would be happy to discuss the bill with you or members of your committee at your convenience.

Sincerely,

Mike Rodgers
Director of Policy and Legislation
Ohio Attorney General's Office