



Written Testimony in Support of SB 109 (Senator Hackett)

May 24, 2024

Chair Abrams and Vice Chair Williams, members of the committee, thank you for your consideration.

We are writing today in support of SB 109 (Senator Hackett), which holds sexually abusive medical professionals accountable for their abuse. We ask for your support in favor of this legislation when it comes before you.

As you may be aware, RAINN is the nation's largest anti-sexual assault organization. Founded in 1994, RAINN created and operates the National Sexual Assault Hotline (800.656.HOPE and rainn.org) and carries out programs to support victims, educate the public, improve public policy, and help companies and organizations improve the way they prevent and respond to sexual violence.

According to a report by the *Columbus Dispatch*, at least 256 Ohio doctors have faced disciplinary action for sexual misconduct between 1980 and 2022.¹ Of those doctors, 199 sexually abused or harassed 449 patients. This number is likely far below reality. In general, sexual assault is highly unreported. Only 310 out of every 1,000 sexual assaults are reported to police. That means more than 2 out of 3 go unreported.² Survivors of sexual assault do not currently have the support of the law to protect them in abusive medical environments. When policies are not in place to support survivors who might report, the law allows abusers to continue harming victims repeatedly.

SB 109 would improve transparency when medical professionals are accused of sexual misconduct. Among its provisions, the bill allows the State Medical Board of Ohio to act quickly when a physician is accused of sexual misconduct, empowering an authority to cut off cycles of abuse when reported by prosecutors or when a healthcare facility launches an investigation.

¹ Hundreds of Ohio doctors disciplined by state for sexual misconduct

² i. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, National Crime Victimization Survey, 2015-2019 (2020).

ii. Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Incident-Based Reporting System, 2012-2016 (2017);

iii. Federal Bureau of Investigation, National Incident-Based Reporting System, 2012-2016 (2017);

iv. Department of Justice, Office of Justice Programs, Bureau of Justice Statistics, Felony Defendants in Large Urban Counties, 2009 (2013).

RAINN

The bill empowers the Board to automatically suspend a licensee charged with a felony in another state and provide written disclosure to patients and post on its website when a practitioner is on probation. We also commend the bill for expanding sexual battery and rape crimes to include unwanted physical activity during medical treatment. The measures in SB 109 will protect survivors in Ohio and establish practices to prevent future abuse in medical environments. This bill is a crucial step to improving and clarifying processes for accountability when it comes to sexual abuse.

As such, we urge you to support this bill and pass it out of committee. Thank you for your continued leadership and for supporting victims of sexual violence in Ohio.