



Representative Gail Pavliga

Good afternoon. Chair Ghanbari, Vice Chair Plummer, and Ranking member Thomas, and members of the House Homeland Security Committee. Thank you for allowing me the opportunity to provide sponsor testimony for House Bill 329. HB 329 would require the Ohio Peace Officer Training Commission to develop training material association with sextortion.

Last year a young man in my district was driven to end his life after becoming the victim of a sextortion crime. James Woods, a senior at Streetsboro High School, thought he was conversing online with another teenager. It was in fact a scammer from outside the country. At one point James shared private photos of himself that the deceiving party threaten to make public and share them online if James did not send them money. James sent \$100 to this person but the threats did not stop.

Over the course of 19 hours James received upwards of 200 messages demanding more money threatening to disclose photos and videos and even encouraging James to kill himself. The stress and trauma were too much.

Cases like this are becoming all too common in Ohio. Everyday our teens are being confronted with more sophisticated and heinous crimes. While the subject matter may be difficult to talk about, we owe it to our adolescent population to confront these issues. Just months after James Woods died another parent in Streetsboro reached out to the police department confirming that their son had been targeted online.

It is imperative that our law enforcement officers have the necessary training to handle these new crimes. It is my hope that HB 329 can be the first step in making Ohio safer for our youth population and that our police officers feel equipped in handling online extortion crimes of this matter.

Thank you again to the Chair and the members of the Homeland Security Committee, I am happy to answer any questions at this time.