



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

October 3, 2019

Statement from the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence on State v. Aaron Roco

HAMILTON COUNTY, OH— As Ohio’s statewide anti-sexual violence coalition, we are alarmed to learn that prosecutors within our state have behaved in ways demeaning and harmful to survivors of sexual assault.

Hamilton County Prosecutor Joseph Deters and Butler County Prosecutor Michael Gmoser have made public comments that are direct instances of victim blaming, and have suggested that the survivor in a sexual assault case has inappropriately interfered in her own rape case.

The failure to provide survivor-centered support for victims directly discourages reports of sexual violence and encourages social acceptance of victim blaming, thereby allowing the perpetrators to avoid accountability for their behavior. It also legitimizes scare tactics used by perpetrators to keep victims from reporting – “nobody will believe you” or “you asked for it.” It may even help perpetrators identify victims who are less likely to report.

The National Crime Victimization Survey published by the Bureau of Justice Statistics reports that from 2010 to 2016, only 230 of every 1,000 rapes were reported to law enforcement. Only 5 resulted in conviction. Survivors of sexual assault commonly fear reporting instances of violence due to a variety of societal biases (e.g., believing that many victims falsely claim rape to get attention, or that only those who’ve been physically injured are telling the truth) persist, and may account for some victim unwillingness to report.

A sexual assault is never the fault of the individual assaulted. No circumstances regarding a person’s location, alcohol intake, dress, career, or position permit or condone sexual assault. It is shameful for elected officials charged with representing the interests of the public to perpetuate narratives that lead to victim blaming, further ingraining a dangerous rape culture in society.

The Ohio Constitution affords victims of criminal offenses fairness, dignity, and respect in the criminal justice process and rights to reasonable and appropriate notice, information, access, and protection and to a meaningful role in the criminal justice process.

The prosecutors’ words and actions in this instance show a refusal to provide a meaningful role to a victim of rape. These messages are dangerous and will undoubtedly have a chilling effect on the reporting of similar instances of violence suffered by future victims.

OAESV stands with the survivor in this and in every case, reported and unreported.

For more information, visit:

- <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2019/09/18/prosecutor-seeks-sanctions-against-lawyer-cincinnati-rape-case/2356196001/>
- <https://www.cincinnati.com/story/news/2019/09/15/cincinnati-lawyer-joe-deters-and-mike-gmoser-mishandled-her-rape-case/2313853001/>

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As Ohio's statewide coalition, OAESV advocates for comprehensive responses and rape crisis services for survivors and empowers communities to prevent sexual violence.

www.oaesv.org

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