



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

September 12, 2019

The Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence Supports Reintroduced Bill to “Provide Testimonial Privilege to Qualified Advocates”

Columbus, Ohio – The Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) stood in support today at a statehouse press conference as State Senator John Eklund (R-Munson Township) and State Representatives Dick Stein (R-Norwalk) and Tavia Galonski (D-Akron) unveiled legislation to “Provide Testimonial Privilege to Qualified Advocates.” The legislation will extend a critical support service for the survivors of sexual violence and human trafficking.

Under current Ohio law, there is no testimonial privilege, such as that between a doctor or lawyer and their clients, for communications between qualified advocates and survivors of certain sex, stalking, trafficking, or domestic violence crimes. Thus, an advocate could be required to testify about their conversations with a victim in criminal, civil, or administrative proceedings.

“I believe that the relationship between victims of sexual violence, stalking, human trafficking, domestic violence—the relationship between those victims and their advocates are very, very much like those relationships that already exist in the law that create privileges,” Sen. Eklund said.

Sophia Fifner, a survivor herself, claims Ohio’s current lack of advocate testimonial privilege is harmful for survivors. “Supporting Advocate Privilege means supporting young women like me. It means providing young girls with the confidence to speak openly about the support and services they need to survive.”

“The role of an advocate cannot function without confidentiality, and Ohio’s lack of advocate privilege creates the potential for deeply damaging breaches,” says Rosa Beltré, Executive Director of the Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence, Ohio’s statewide anti-sexual assault coalition that works to advocate for comprehensive responses and rape crisis services for survivors and seeks to empower communities to prevent sexual violence. Many advocates and survivors stood in support of the reintroduced bill.

Rep. Galonski added, “If we don’t pass this law in Ohio, we’re encouraging, sort of, the rape culture environment.” She said, “You need to be thinking that this is doing so much for Ohio and Ohio families and Ohio victims by passing this law...People...will be able to say with confidence that Ohio cares enough about its victims to put trust in the forefront.”

The bill was introduced to the Ohio Senate this morning; the next step is for Senator Obhoff, Senate President, to assign the bill to committee.

Press Conference Video: <http://ohiochannel.org/collections/press-conference>

For questions, please write us at info@oaesv.org.

Thank you,

The Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence

www.oaesv.org

#####

For interviews or questions, please contact: Taylr Ucker-Lauderman

Director of Communications

Phone: (216) 317-2339

Email: tucker-lauderman@oaesv.org

Facebook: <https://www.facebook.com/oaesv/>

Twitter: <https://twitter.com/OhioAllianceESV>

Instagram: <https://www.instagram.com/oaesv/>