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Ohio Anti-Sexual Violence Coalition Commends Ohio House on Historic Passage of House Bill 161

On Wednesday, November 29th, the Ohio House of Representatives passed House Bill 161 (“Eliminate spousal exceptions for certain sex offenses”). This significant vote follows decades of advocacy to pass this initiative in Ohio – over three decades of attempts to close the harmful spousal rape loophole, to be precise.

Ohio is in the minority of states that still has a loophole in our state code. This bill would close that loophole. In recent years, California, Minnesota, Oklahoma, and Idaho have removed spousal exceptions from their state laws. ***A marriage license does not excuse sexual violence.***

The Ohio Alliance to End Sexual Violence (OAESV) commends the Ohio House of Representatives for their commitment to survivors of sexual violence. In coalition with its 36 rape crisis programs in Ohio, OAESV is a longtime supporter of the many iterations of House Bill 161 and the current introduced version of the bill. OAESV the bill sponsors Representative Jessica Miranda (D-Forest Park) and Representative Brett Hillyer (R-Uhrichsville) for their steadfast support of the bill. Several survivors also testified in support of House Bill 161 in the Ohio House Criminal Justice Committee. OAESV is grateful to these survivors for their courage in coming forward and using their voices to effectuate change.

OAESV Public Policy Director Emily Gemar notes, “This historic vote is a testament to the power of community and education. In discussing the bill with lawmakers, our state network, and members of the public, a frequent reaction has been disbelief and shock that this loophole still exists in our state. However, as the statewide leader on sexual violence in Ohio, we know that the impact of spousal rape and abuse is no less significant than that which is committed outside of a marriage. Our network of advocates, along with the survivors who testified, were instrumental in moving this bill forward.”

OAESV extends our deep gratitude to all who added their voice to this collective effort. The bill now moves to the Ohio Senate for further consideration.

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Interviews available upon request.

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