

Ohio Legislators Introduce Braden's Law to Criminalize Sextortion

MAY 17, 2024

A groundbreaking legislative initiative aimed at addressing the pervasive issue of sextortion and providing crucial support to victims' families was unveiled Thursday in Ohio. Braden's Law, which was introduced by Ohio State Senator Andrew Brenner and State Representatives Beth Lear and Brian Lorenz, represents a significant step forward in protecting Ohio's citizens from the insidious threat of sextortion. Benesch is proud to have provided pro bono services through the firm's Government Relations Practice Group to help create Braden's Law and looks forward to helping this legislation through the legislative process.

Braden's Law would categorize sextortion as a criminal offense within the state with strong penalties, sending a clear message that such exploitative behavior will not be tolerated. One of the key provisions of this legislation is the establishment of a pathway for parents or guardians to access the digital devices of deceased minors through the Court of Common Pleas within 30 days of their passing. This measure seeks to alleviate the burden on grieving families by providing them with timely access to crucial information.

The aim is to get Braden's Law to the governor's desk and passed before the next school year begins.

The tragic impetus behind Braden's Law is the loss of [Braden Markus](#), an Olentangy High School student who tragically took his own life on Oct. 17th, 2021, just 27 minutes after falling victim to online exploitation. Braden's parents, Jenn and Jarod Markus, endured months of anguish after being denied access to Braden's personal cell phone by large technology companies. Their tireless advocacy, in collaboration with state legislators, local supporters and Markus family friend, Rachel Winder, Benesch's Director of Government Relations, propelled the drafting and garnering of support for Braden's Law.

Jenn and Jarod Markus have been steadfast in their commitment to preventing other families from experiencing similar tragedies. Their dedication underscores the urgent need for legislative action to protect vulnerable individuals and support those affected by online exploitation.

Benesch stands united in the firm's resolve to create a safer and more compassionate society for all. Together, let us honor Braden's memory by enacting meaningful change and preventing further harm to our communities.

If you or someone you know is struggling or in crisis, call or text 988 or chat 988lifeline.org for 24-hour, confidential support via the 988 Suicide and Crisis Lifeline.

See additional press coverage below:

Family of Ohio teen sextortion victim determined to get bill through the statehouse

'It's been a living hell': Mom of Olentangy teen who died by suicide helps craft bill targeting sextortion scams

Bill Aims To Crack Down On Sexual Extortion