

THE PULSE -JOURNAL

EDITORIAL

Teen-dating abuse bills are needed

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Earlier this month, we expressed our support for state House Bill 19 — aka "Tina's Law" — which would require Ohio schools to educate young people about teen dating violence and to adopt dating violence policies. We also noted the value of other pending legislation — House Bill 10 — that would allow juvenile courts in Ohio to issue protection orders for minors involved in abusive dating relationships, a measure current state law does not provide for.

This week, the Buckeye State gained some unwanted notoriety for that gap in state law. Ohio was among 11 states that received a failing grade from a national teen-violence prevention group called "Break The Cycle." Any state that does not allow minors to seek protection orders automatically received an "F," according to the Associated Press. (By the way, five states — New Hampshire, California, Illinois, Minnesota and Oklahoma — received an "A" from Break The Cycle for their efforts in combating this phenomenon.)

The organization contends that too many states, such as Ohio, do not appropriately deal with dating abuse which is estimated by some surveys to affect one in every three youths.

The roots of "Tina's Law" are in Butler County, the home of James and Elsa Croucher, whose local organization, Citizens Against Domestic Violence, has labored to educate young people about the dangers of dating violence. They should know. Their 18-year-old daughter, Tina, was murdered by her abusive ex-boyfriend in 1992. Ohio's failing grade from Break The Cycle likely did not surprise the Crouchers.

Ohio Attorney General Richard Cordray has expressed his support for H.B. 19 (Tina's Law), sponsored by Rep. Sandra Stablile Harwood, D-Niles, and H.B. 10, sponsored by Rep. Edna Brown, D-Toledo. "Passing these two bills will improve our support to victims of dating violence and allow teens who are threatened by abuse to seek help," he said.

We agree. We're grateful that the Break The Cycle group has drawn attention to the failings of Ohio and other states that do not treat this form of abuse — fatal in some cases — like the crime it is. State lawmakers should expedite passage of these two important bills.