For Immediate Release
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April 12, 2013

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Recognizing the “Forgotten Victims” of Crime

Columbus – When a man is incarcerated, not only is his life changed, but also his partner and their children. Those left behind are “forgotten victims”, left without the support of their partner. They must work alone, providing adequate support for themselves and their children. They must take on the role of the absent partner in the lives of their children, trying to keep some semblance of normalcy, while also being treated by many as a “second class” citizen.

Recognizing the importance of identifying and supporting these victims, a resolution was recently introduced in the Ohio Legislature by two local representatives, Ohio Senator Cliff Hite introduced Senate Concurrent Resolution (S.C.R. 8), while Ohio State Representative Lynn Wachtmann introduced its companion, House Concurrent Resolution (H.C.R. 8). The Ohio Senate voted 33-0 in support of S.C.R. 8 on April 10, 2013.

“I am proud to sponsor this resolution and believe that, once people recognize the negative impact of these ‘forgotten victims’, the citizens of Ohio will step up and comprehend the importance of strengthening these families, not tearing them down,” said State Senator Cliff Hite. “Nationwide, there are more than 1.7 million children that have an incarcerated parent and these at-risk youth need encouragement, not to be regarded as second-class citizens, lest they prolong a generational cycle of incarceration.”

This resolution recognizes the month of April as “Forgotten Victims of Crime Recognition Month”, identifying and bringing greater awareness to the “forgotten victims” of incarceration, the family members whose lives are altered when their loved one goes to prison.

“As a sponsor of this resolution in the Ohio House of Representatives, I trust that the citizens of Ohio will become more aware of how incarceration impacts everyone, whether they are the victim of the crime, the citizens, the community or the family,” State Representative Lynn Wachtmann said. “These ‘forgotten victims’, the partners and children of those incarcerated, deserve to be treated with the respect due any other citizen.”

“We are thankful of the work of State Senator Hite and State Representative Wachtmann in seeking to recognize the plight of the forgotten victims of crime” – the families of the person incarcerated,” said Catherine Tijerina, Co-Executive Director of the RIDGE Project. “As a former forgotten victim myself, I am pleased that this legislation will bring to light the necessity of reaching out to the families affected by incarceration, and will highlight the importance of encouraging them and providing a lifeline during this challenging time.”

The RIDGE Project works to counter the potential devastation on the family when one member of the
family is severed from the family unit through incarceration, leaving behind family members who become victims themselves.

“Through the work of The RIDGE Project, we have the opportunity every day to advocate for those who do not have a voice, the forgotten victims of incarceration,” Ron Tijerina, Co-Executive Director of The RIDGE Project said. “We appreciate these efforts by Ohio’s leaders to highlight the need for awareness of victims of crime who often go unnoticed by our society.”

The goal of The RIDGE Project is to “Build a Legacy of Strong Families”. Various RIDGE programs work to change the hearts and minds of those who are incarcerated, breaking down the walls of generational incarceration. This concurrent resolution recognizes the work that must be done outside the prison walls.

The RIDGE Project has been recognized as a federal Department of Health and Human Services “Best Practice” program, and has been identified nationally as a leader in fatherhood and prisoner re-entry efforts.

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