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DOMESTIC VIOLENCE AWARENESS MONTH

Muncie Indiana – As October comes to a close, I wanted to take a moment to reflect on the fact that this month is Domestic Violence Awareness month. While domestic violence and intimate partner abuse is something we should be aware of every month, October is a chance to bring attention to something that affects every single part of Indiana and our nation.

As your prosecutor here in Delaware County, I wanted to take a moment to talk about the nature of domestic violence and give the residents of our community some helpful tips on how we can all do our part to combat it.

In Indiana, more than 42% of women and 27% of men experience some form of intimate partner violence in their lifetime, according to the National Coalition Against Domestic Violence. This violence can take the form of physical, verbal, sexual, or psychological abuse including stalking, harassment or intimidation. Sadly, things have only gotten worse over the past few years, due in part to the COVID pandemic.

Too often domestic violence goes unreported for a wide variety of reasons. Many survivors feel trapped, have nowhere else to go or think no one will believe them. They may have reported in the past with no meaningful results. When there are children and/or pets for the survivor to think of, too, a survivor's reasons for staying in an abusive relationship can be all the more complicated.

But there are ways to help. Make sure to safely check in on your friends, family, neighbors and acquaintances and understand the signs of potential abuse. Some are easier to identify than others, such as: bruises, black eyes or unexplained injuries. Other signs of physically or emotionally abusive and controlling relationships can be more difficult to spot. These may include: abrupt personality changes, loss of self-esteem, constantly checking in with their partner for approval, frequently changing plans and not visiting family or friends, and more. If you think someone you know may be suffering from abuse, don't be silent. Talk to the person you are worried about and share your concerns. Listen to them and let them know that you care and are available to help. Continue to check in on them and don't be

afraid to alert the authorities and direct them to available resources. The National Domestic Violence Hotline is open 24/7 and can be reached at 800-799-7233. Recently, Indiana passed a bill that will help domestic violence survivors who might be testifying against their abuser. It adds a possible charge of Obstruction of Justice against anyone who tells a witness to lie or not show up to a court proceeding. Many survivors are bullied into not cooperating by their abuser or the abuser's family members. This new law should help address that behavior and further protect survivors.

I want you to know that our office takes these kinds of cases very seriously and will do our best to ensure Delaware County is not a place where domestic abusers can get away with their crimes. Its up to all of us to do our part to try and eradicate this scourge from our community.

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