



ELLIOT KOLKOVICH

SUMMIT COUNTY PROSECUTOR

For Immediate Release
Monday, March 30, 2026
CONTACT: [Elaine Vilem](#)
(330) 643-8386

SUMMIT COUNTY COUNCIL UNANIMOUSLY PASSES PROSECUTOR KOLKOVICH'S RESOLUTION TO HONOR START BY BELIEVING DAY



*Resolution Officially Recognizes April 1, 2026 as Start by Believing Day to Support
Survivors of Sexual Violence*

AKRON, OH – Today, Summit County Prosecutor Elliot Kolkovich announced that the Summit County Council unanimously passed his legislation, Resolution 2026-077, which recognizes April 1, 2026 as Start by Believing Day to make it clear to all survivors of sexual violence: Summit County believes you. The resolution also encourages community members, businesses, and organizations to wear or display teal—the color associated with Start by Believing and Sexual Assault Awareness Month—on Wednesday as a visual display of this support. Full text of the resolution can be found [here](#).

“Survivors often fear they won’t be believed, that their experiences will be minimized, or that seeking justice will only bring more pain after they already experienced a traumatic crime. Start by Believing is about empowering survivors, encouraging more people to report crime, and seriously investigating those reports—which ultimately makes our communities safer for everyone,” said Prosecutor Kolkovich.

This is the second year Prosecutor Kolkovich has introduced this legislation to Summit County Council as part of his annual Start by Believing campaign. The annual campaign, created by End Violence Against Women International (EVAWI), aims to change the way society responds to disclosures of sexual violence and abuse. It encourages individuals, communities, and institutions to take a supportive approach when survivors come forward.

Start by Believing Day is always the first Wednesday in April, which is Sexual Assault Awareness Month. Following later in the month is National Crime Victims’ Rights Week, which runs April 19 to 25 this year, and is sponsored by the Department of Justice’s Office for Victims of Crimes. Sexual Assault Awareness Month aims to empower survivors, educate the public, and encourage communities to take action in supporting victims of violence and other crimes.

Prosecutor Kolkovich encourages residents to support and believe victims of crime and avoid asking questions like, “why were you in that part of town?” or “what were you wearing?” or “why did you do that?” Questions like these contribute to victim-blaming culture, implying the survivor caused or even deserved what happened to them. In turn, this can make many survivors of crime—especially sexual violence—refrain from reporting the crime due to fear that no one will believe them. Beginning from a place of belief also sets the stage for a thorough, evidence-based investigation, rather than brushing off what happened and delaying action.

To further promote the Start by Believing campaign, Prosecutor Kolkovich will be hosting a Pledge Event at the University of Akron’s Jean Hower Taber Student Union on Wednesday from 11 a.m. to 2 p.m. The event will engage students to learn about common myths surrounding sexual assault, resources available for sexual assault survivors, and how they can support someone who discloses an incident of sexual assault to them. The Prosecutor’s Office is collaborating with the University of Akron’s Sexual Assault and Violence Education (SAVE) Team, sorority members, and student athletes to put on the event.

Additionally, on April 21, during National Crime Victims Rights Week, Prosecutor Kolkovich is hosting a Resource Fair at the Twinsburg Parks and Recreation’s Community Center that will feature local Summit County organizations that serve survivors of sexual violence, from initial medical care, to trauma therapy, to free legal assistance. The fair will be immediately followed by a free self-defense class for women that is taught by a former law enforcement officer that is now a certified self-defense instructor.

The disbelief that sexual violence survivors often face when they come forward is the reason behind EVAWI’s Start by Believing campaign. In Summit County, the local campaign was initially launched in 2019 by former Summit County Prosecutor Sherri Bevan Walsh. Prosecutor Kolkovich honors both the campaign and her legacy by continuing this important initiative to support crime victims.

If you or someone you know is a survivor of sexual violence, there are resources available. In Summit County, the 24-hour Hope and Healing Survivor Resource Hotline is (330) 374-1111. The Victim Assistance Program 24-hour hotline is (330) 376-0040. Survivors outside of Summit County and throughout the country can call RAINN's National Sexual Assault Hotline at (800) 656-HOPE (4673).

###